
THE WIRE
adventures in modern music
ISSUE 143 · NOVEMBER 95 · $2.50 / US$5.50
Stockhausen
Versus the Technocrats
Space Rock Stateside
Tortoise, Labradford,
Jon Spencer
Jaz Coleman
Orchestral Manoeuvres
Eddie Palmieri
Andrew Poppy
Wayne Shorter
Mark Isham
Marc Almond
glam savage
CDs · BOOKS · MULTIMEDIA · NEWS · FREE OFFERS · OVER 20 PAGES OF REVIEWS

27 of the people who are reading this video the weather forecast.

4 of you walk sideways.

10 people have x-ray vision.

11 played for Arsenal on Saturday.

78 of you bite the duvet.

But you look like ordinary people.

And this, looks like ordinary whisky...



NO ORDINARY WHISKY.

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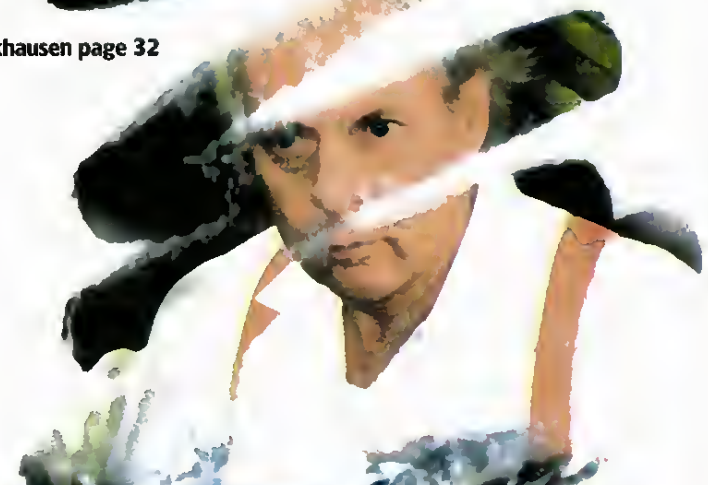
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THE WIRE
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Issue 141 November 1995
£2.50 $5.50 ISSN 0952-0686 (USPS 006231)

45-46 Poland Street · London W1V 3DF · UK
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Eastern News Distributors
250 West 55th Street
New York, NY 10019, US
Tel (212) 649 4484
(USA newsstand queries, call Toll Free 1800 221 3148)

Printed by St Ives PLC
The Wire is a member of the Namara Group (Chairman Naim Attallah). It is published 12 times per year by The Wire Magazine Ltd, 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF. Tel 0171 439 6422. Fax 0171 287 4767. USA Subscriptions $50 per annum. 2nd Class postage is paid at Hackensack NJ 07601. Postmaster: Please send address changes to *The Wire* (Royal Mail International) c/o Yellowstone International, 2375 Pratt Boulevard, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-5937, USA.

Special thanks this issue to Joy Lewis, Sue Steward, Lizzie Franklin and Alex McKechnie.
Cover photograph of Marc Almond **Katie Tueton**

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The December issue of *The Wire*
74 flesh-tearing pages of features, interviews, CD reviews, books, multimedia, live events, free offers and more. .
On sale Tuesday 28 November

letters

Sketches of Spain

I got to know your magazine in June in Barcelona at the SONAR electronic music festival. Until then I didn't know there was a British magazine touching so many different aspects of the late XX century music.

My general idea about British music press was closer to the weekly futility of *MM* or *NME*, although whenever I had the chance to read them I did. I have to say that it's easier for me to enjoy the pictures than texts of those magazines.

It doesn't make me especially happy to tell you that for Spanish music professionals (from musicians to critics) there aren't many chances to get good publications. There used to be a Spanish issue of the French *Les Inrockuptibles*, where we could read, at least, some nice interviews, but unfortunately, that publication only lasted three months.

Ten years ago there was a big pop scene in Spain. Radios used to play those bands very often and people were really interested in pop music. Some would say all that 'wave' was simply a cheap reinvention (or copy) of the British and American 'punkesque' attitudes, but I think it wasn't only that but also a serious try to open Spanish music perspectives and, above all, the wish to take part of a culture, the European one, that for a long time and because of historical reasons (fascism, fascism and fascism, mainly) had stayed too far from Spaniards' worries.

I grew up surrounded by pop during those years and I think that transgressive punk rock feeling opened my mind in a way that 18 years of studies would never have done. The learning and excitement I got through pop music were much closer to the feeling you get while travelling than studying.

But unfortunately, things changed very quick, and soon most of those bands disappeared or became the cheap imitations they had been avoiding to be when they started playing.

After the experimentation and the mixtures of rhythms, the people decided their culture was much more worth than any other, then started the so-called cultural celebration of Spanish values that took the music to the difficult position where it stands right now in between the pathetic copy of the (so-called, as well) independent bands and labels, and the mainstream and easy listening commercial tunes and rhythms (including teenage Techno from Valencia).

Flamenco tradition based on improvisation doesn't fit very well in the pop song structure because the 'band spirit' of some people with similar ideas and interests trying to find its own sound seems to be something 'too easy and too common' to entertain an audience that prefers, definitively, the instrumental ego-trips of the 'virtuosos'.

I wonder whether there exists a similar phenomenon in England or not? Is not the 90s Brit-pop a cultural celebration of the most typical British music tradition? And what about those hundreds of Spanish bands singing in English? Just try to guess how big the pop influence has been in countries where people have got used to listening to music in a foreign language. And this is not mental masturbation, but a fact that nobody now hides in Spain.

Excepting all those kids that want to make a band to look like their idols, and all those proud Spaniards obsessed with the pureness of the flamenco roots, there is nothing else worth being told. Last evening I met

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF,
or fax. 0171 287 4767, or e-mail: *the_wire@ukonline.co.uk*
Every letter published wins a FREE CD

three Justine Frischmanns at the old town, a couple of resurrected Cobains

In a way it seems like that world pop culture that gave me, at least, something to talk about with people from different countries has gone From now on, people will exchange 'folk tapes' as exotic merchandise, souvenirs, the way football teams do with small flags before the match And that's a different kind of relationship among people and cultures So we have industrial copies, cultural celebrations of roots and pureness or simply indifference

Probably you will think I'm taking all this question too hard and probably you are right But I would start taking it much more easily if in my country there would be some more options, a bigger menu

Ernesto Garcia Rodriguez *Madrid*

The weak in review

I'd like to call the need for Soundcheck into question Each review is a little ad for a CD CDs are expensive consumer items first and foremost, no matter what the musical content You're devoting a significant part of your magazine — approximately 25 per cent of the page count — to a covert advertising feature That might be a convenient piece of attitude reinforcement for the paid advertisers who use your magazine, but it's hardly taking a step back to analyse music, is it? If your sales rest on music mag conventions like the product review, isn't it time to start a new magazine?

The little essays by the likes of David Toop and Paul Schutze that masquerade as reviews offer one alternative

Your discussions of Jungle started this train of thought Lately, you've treated Jungle as just another genre of recorded music one can buy and listen to under particular circumstances lounge room, jogging, car, etc Surely 'live' Jungle in clubs is at least as important — there's the musical element of risk, and a white punter has to share space with black people, with all the cross-cultural communication that entails

I'm not saying abolish the CD reviews, I'm saying justify them, loudly I don't buy your magazine as a late 20th century cultural text to deconstruct I pay your writers to save me the bother At least, I think I do

By the way, keep printing stuff by Ian Penman he's turning into some sort of fucking writer

Tim Gaze *Coromandel Valley, Southern Australia*

Bubble vision

There's still no other magazine that can touch *The Wire*, I'm pleased to opine, even with the occasional outrageous hyping of utter cobblers (a cover and three whole pages devoted to DJ Spooky, issue 138) Mind you, there does seem to be a gap in your coverage, wide as its range is its the gap between the music and its potential listeners

Every month there's another huge list of names, titles, labels, places, obscure/arcane connections to explore What happens to all this stuff? Who buys the raved about Keiji Haino records? How many once-all-the-rage Techno sides from the last few years are still being kept alive anywhere? Who the hell reads *The Wire*? What do they do with it?

Don't tell me an article on demographics' metaphysical implications is out of the question I've seen too many reviews and articles that touched on the music's effects on one side of the cultural matrix (usually, how musicians got influenced or influence) What about us suckers and holy fools who go out of our way to partake of all this activity at second hand?

It's no good asking most musicians anything, all they ever say is "I don't want to be restricted to just one thing, blah blah I've been very busy lately, blah, blah Here are five new records with input from me about to come out, blah, blah It's wrong to strictly compartmentalise musical genres, blah, blah, etc " They simply chuck the stuff out, each in his/her own little bubble, seemingly indifferent to whether anyone hears it How to make a start somewhere? Free discs given away with magazines can be very useful, and God bless Radio 3 for programming some opportunities to taste more otherwise lost treasures

I propose that you cross Jilly Goulden with Diamanda Galas and send her off to make unannounced visits to shops and venues where a feel for the landscapes inhabited by the consumers/bricklayers of the trans-avant garde could be obtained You could give her a large dog called Wire to add fun. You could play recordings of stroked wine glass rims in Invisible Jukebox You could kill her dog and issue a sound recording of its final yelps Come on — get the creative editor's mind working on this vast area

Simon Fay *Stockport*

Vocal support

I was pleased to see the fine article on countertenors (*The Wire* 140) and the almost ethereal quality of their silver voices, especially relating to Bowman, Chance and James

However, I feel the German alto Jochen Kowalski is in a different category altogether, because he is more trumpet than saxophone and more cello than viola Kowalski has a bewitching texture of tone and is easily able to conjure phrases of great delicacy or produce a fanfare of depth and power

In Mozart's *Mitridate, Re Di Ponto* at the Royal Opera House, Kowalski's Farnace was magic and the tremendous ovation he received from the audience left one in no doubt that we were in the presence of an enormous talent, an exceptionally beautiful voice and a captivating personality

Brian Court-Mappin *London*

Golden Virginia

I am currently in the process of putting together a book about the life, times and music of Virginia Astley, which I hope to issue in the New Year It will be a limited edition and aimed at collectors who care about the music of this vastly underrated artist.

If any *Wire* reader would like to contribute to the book I shall give them full credit I need interviews, reminiscences, background, especially about Astley's activities as a session singer and classical music student, and anything else which may be relevant

Ideally, I would prefer to be no more than the editor of the book, using as much of other peoples' writings as possible

Deke Rivers *249 Whitegate Drive, Blackpool, Lancs*

sounding off

Live dates, multimedia events, happenings...
Compiled by **Rob Young**

News items should reach us by
Friday 10 November for inclusion in the December issue



Pram

Transgressions Probably the best celebration of the kind of *Wire*-style mindbending musical diversity that you'll find all year, and the best news is it's absolutely FREE! Transgressions promises to be a unique kind of live event: three nights of New Music spanning experimental rock and Electronica, improvisation, post-rave DJ culture, artcore drum 'n' bass, art and video installations and much more, all in a specially created location in Central London. Here's the line-up: Saturday 4 November — Playing live: Otomo Yoshihide, Pram, Wishmountain, DJing from DJ Vadim and Asian Dub Foundation, an installation created by Ninja Tune's Funki Porcini, visual projections from Lepke. Sat 11 November — Live: the debut UK performance of OJ Spooky Tha Subliminal Kid, µ-Ziq aka Mike Paradinas, Pierre Bastien from Belgium, with his 'Musique Machinale' Meccano sound sculptures, and Celeste, a screening session by London's underground film makers Exploding Cinema, a special environment created by Scanner, sound systems by Earthtribe and Ramjac. Sat 18 November — Live: improvising cellist Frances-Marie Uitti, drum 'n' bass rising star Alex Reece, amplified sound sculptures from Oscillate's Jony Easterby, Chill Out groove technicians The Mellowtrons, DJing from Fila Brazilia and Solid Doctor; and visual navigation by Orbital's projectionist, Giles Thacker. In addition, on each night a crew of Net sherpas from multimedia outfit Obsolete will be in attendance to help you get on-line, LMC musicians will be improvising between sets, Cafe Party provide musical sustenance in the bar, and there'll be numerous surprise DJs and musical performances occuring throughout. All events begin at 9pm and finish around 2-3am. Transgressions will take place at a secret location in Central London, admission on all three nights is FREE and by ticket only. **For information on how to obtain tickets and details of the venue location, phone 0171 494 1340** (or check the website at: http://www.obsolete.com/carrot/)

Multimusic Piano Circus host this new music festival (29 November-9 December) at The Place Theatre, one of London's top dance venues. Most featured artists are on the cusp of crossover appeal from contemporary music into more popular domains. Piano Circus headline two nights: 29 November (playing Fitkin, Glass, Bryars, Part, Reich and more) and 2 December, with new British composition. Other acts include The Steve Martland Band (30) performing Andriessen, Westbrook and Martland, Nitin Sawhney and The Smith Quartet (1 December), Apollo Saxophone Quartet (2), Radio Science Orchestra with a selection of music including works for theremin, and Errolyn Wallen (4), Sirinu and Django Bates's Delightful Precipice (5), Nikki Yeoh's Infinitum and The Kreisler String Orchestra (6), Cambridge New Music Players (7), progressive ensembles Commedia and Icebreaker (8), and Quite Sane with Ensemble Bash (9). All programmes start at 8pm, tickets are £8/£6 concs. Box Office for tickets and information 0171 383 0031.

MULTIMUSIC TICKET OFFER
Readers of *The Wire* can get £2 OFF tickets for any of the above concerts provided you book before 28 November. You can get as many tickets as you like at the discounted rate simply phone the Box Office or call in at The Place, 17 Dukes Road, London WC1H 9AB, quoting '*The Wire* Multimusic ticket offer'

London International Jazz Festival City-wide fiesta of traditional, modern and avant garde jazz and improvisation, running from 10-19 November. Here is the complete listing of all major concerts, by venue.

Blackheath Concert Halls (0181 463 0100): Mike & Kate Westbrook Trio (12, 8pm, £10/£8). ICA (0171 930 3647): LMC day featuring Barry Guy & Mats Gustafsson, Roger Smith and Dorothea Schurch (12, 4pm), Derek Bailey & Robin Schulkovsky, John Butcher and Phil Minton (8pm, each £7/£5 or £10/£7 for both concerts). Purcell Room (0171 960 4242): African Caribbean Quartet (10, 8pm, £10), Angolan singer Andre Mingas (11, 8pm, £8), Jessica Lauren/Nikki Yeoh/Errolyn Wallen (12, 7.30pm, £10), Giant Steppes (13, 8pm, £6.50), avant garde tango man Mosalini & His Grand Orchestra (15-16, 8pm, £8), Jean Toussaint & Tony Remy's Street Vibe (17, 7.30pm, £10), Carol Kidd (18, 7.30pm, £12.50/£10), Moscow Art Trio (19, 7.30pm, £9). Queen Elizabeth Hall (0171 960 4242): George Russell And The Living Time Orchestra (11, 7.45pm, £12.50/£10), Juan Martin and Adel Salameh guitar duet in flamenco/Arabian crossover (12, 7.45pm, £15-£10), Piano Circus (13, 7.45pm, £12.50/£10), Art



The Art Ensemble's Lester Bowie

PHOTO: DENIS DALBY

Live In Brief

Bandulu Infonet label's flagship group, performing full live sets. Nottingham Marcus Garvey Centre, 3 November, 10pm, £8, 0115 941 7467; Manchester NIA Centre, 18, 9pm, £8 adv/£10 door, 0161 227 9254.

Gavin Bryars Premiere of UK composer's first opera, *Medea*, by 88C Scottish Symphony Orchestra. Glasgow Tramway, 3 November, 7:30pm, 0141 338 2917.

Ornette Coleman Only UK performance of *Tone Dialing*, with Prime Time, vocalists and dancers. London RFH, 8 November, £20-£8, 0171 960 4242.

Foetus Jim Thirlwell sandpapers up those vocal chords for first UK show in seven years. London Garage, 8 November, 0171 607 1818.

Eddie Palmieri Two nights illuminated by the Sun of Latin Music. London Jazz Cafe, 1-2 November, £12.50 adv/£15 door, 0171 916 6000

Pere Ubu A rare evening's datapank from David Thomas and friends. London LA2, 17 November, 7pm, £8, 0171 434 0403.

Sabri Brothers Leading Qawwali musicians from Pakistan. London Union Chapel, 23 November, 8pm, £10/£8, 0171 226 1686.

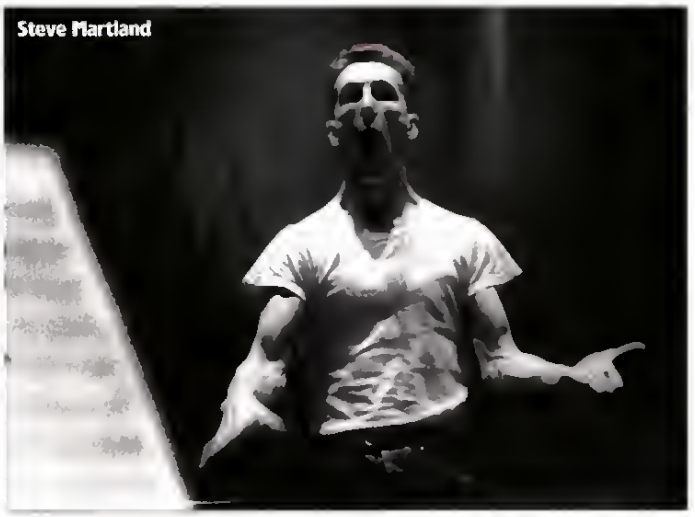
Sinfonye Stevie Wishart's unusual vocal Early Music outfit, mixing traditional instruments with electronics. London St James's Church, 1 November, 7:30pm, £10-£4, 0171 437 5053.

David Sylvian Solo performance featuring past hits and new work in progress. London RFH, 4 November, 8pm, £14.50-£11.50, 0171 960 4242.

Terem Quartet St Petersburg eclecticians signed to Real World. London Dingwalls (2 November), Reading Rising Sun (3), Swansea Patti Arts Centre (4), Cambridge Boat Race (5)

Unmen Ex-Echo City duo in live Ambient collage situation. London Union Chapel, 11 November, 8pm, £7/£5, 0171 226 1686

Ensemble Of Chicago celebrating 30th anniversary with a quintet of African drummers (16, 7.45pm, £17.50-£12.50), Barbara Thompson/BBC Singers/Medici String Quartet (17, 7.30pm, £10/£8). Royal Festival Hall (0171 960 4242). Tuck & Patti/Carmel (12, 7.30pm, £17.50/£12.50), Stanley Clarke/Al Di Meola/Jean Luc Ponty (18, 7.30pm, £17.50/£12.50), Wayne Shorter (19, 7.30pm, £17.50/£12.50). Shepherd's Bush Empire (0181 740 7474). Incognito/Branford Marsalis's Buckshot Le Fonque (12-13, 8pm, £13.50), Spyro Gyra (14, 8pm, £12.50). Union Chapel (0171 226 1686). Grand Union's Dancing In The Flames (10-11, Main Space, 8pm, £8/£5), Slant — The Oblivion Of Surface Language (10, Studio Theatre, 8pm, £7/£5), Vietnam Symphony — poet Martin Box with Henry Lowther, Art Theman, Norma Winstone, Phil Lee, plus visuals by Eduardo Paolozzi (14, 8pm, £7/£5), Roots Flute Dynamite with Hassan Erraji and Guo Yue (18, 8pm), Jazz Flute Dynamite with Frank Wess, Rowland Sutherland and Ali Ryerson (19, 7.30pm, £10/£8). Watermans Arts Centre (0181 568 1176). David Murray & The UK Arts Posse (11, 8pm, £7), Django Bates's Human Chain plus Nikki Yeoh (17, £7), John Surman solo (19, 8pm, £7). Plus much other activity in clubs, bars and foyers around town ring the Festival Hotline on 0171 405 5974 for full details and a brochure


Steve Martland

Huddersfield Festival

One of the UK's most diverse festivals of contemporary music, this year's Huddersfield event takes place between 15-26 November. Centrepiece is the first ever UK retrospective of the work of Italian composer Luigi Nono. Leading interpreters of his music, Germany's Heinrich Strobel Experimental Studio, will be in attendance to focus on Nono's live electronics with a series of installations. Two days (17-19) are devoted to Terry Riley's music after *In C*, including his Indian influences and a solo piano recital by Riley himself. The intricate maximalism of James Dillon is on display on 19, with a performance of his orchestral *Helle Nacht*. Other appearances and featured composers include Piano Circus (21), Brian Ferneyhough, Heinz Holliger, Maurizio Kagel, Judith Weir, James MacMillan, Musikfabrik, Moscow Art Trio, Boulez and Stockhausen piano works, George Russell and The Balanescu Quartet. Full details on dates, times, ticket prices and special deals can be obtained from the Festival Hotline on 01484 425082

Incus Week

London's October Gallery (24 Old Gloucester Street) is the venue for a celebration of the best and most uncompromising improvised music gathered under the aegis of Derek Bailey's Incus label. The week


Terry Riley

PHOTO NICK WHITE

runs from 28 November-2 December, line-up as follows: Vanessa Mackness & John Butcher, Roger Smith & Neil Metcalfe (28 November), Tony Oxley & Derek Bailey (29), Ascension, Dr Switch & Alex Ward (30), Keith Rowe & Derek Bailey (1 December), Will Gaines & Derek Bailey (2). All concerts start at 7.30pm, tickets £7/£5 (season ticket £25) from Incus, 14 Downs Road, London E5 8DS. Information on 0181 986 6904

Oxford Festival

Another large-scale contemporary music festival (27 October-12 November) featuring such performers as James Wood's Critical Band, New London Chamber Choir, Chagall Trio, James Clapperton, Keith Tippett, Rolf Hind, Bingham String Quartet, Composers' Ensemble,

sounding off

Ensemble Bash and The Endymion Ensemble. Featured composers include Jonathan Harvey, Giacinto Scelsi, Harrison Birtwistle, Iannis Xenakis, Howard Skempton, Michael Finnissy, Luigi Nono, Cornelius Cardew, Simon Holt, Gerald Barry, Franco Donatoni, Henri Dutilleux, Robert Saxton and many more. In addition, there's an exhibition of Colin Rose's 'New Complexity paintings' inspired by modern music, and a solar powered kinetic sculpture display. Concerts take place in several Oxford venues including the Jacqueline Du Pre Music Building and Holywell Music Room, tickets are £6/£3 for most concerts, brochure and info on 01865 739119. Box Office 01865 261384.

The Young Gods The Swiss kings of elemental sampling release a new EP this month, "Kissing The Sun" (Play It Again Sam), which includes remixes by Mad Professor, Meat Beat Manifesto and others, and tour selected venues around the UK, supported by Papa Brittle. Oates are: London Forum (11 November), Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms (12), Dublin Mean Fiddler (14), Belfast Limelight (15), Edinburgh The Venue (16) and Newcastle Riverside (17). More dates still to be announced: check press for details.

Disobey They're calling it 'the penultimate Disobey', which can only mean one thing: there must be three more to go. It's on 16 November, and is an entirely non-guitar/bass/drums evening. Making sound: Aphex Twin, Cylob, Bradley Stryder, IG88 and Panik all DJing in time, sometimes in reverse, plus German digital deprogrammers Oval, performing and remaining in attendance at their trade counter to attend to your distressed CD needs. DJ Beekeeper is on hand to keep, or disturb, the peace. London Upstairs at the Garage, 8pm, £6. Also this month, those busy boys Panasonic appear with Autechre at Sheffield Hallamshire (1 November) and have their John Peel session broadcast on 5. Direct all Disobey enquiries to 0181 960 9529.



Electronic Lounge Chewing the fat with a side order of abstract noise from Tony Wilson of Zurich/Leaf Records. London ICA, 7 November, 8pm–1am, £2.50/£2. Info 0171 498 3032.

Lydia Lunch The bane of hecklers tours the UK with punk diva Exene Cervenka. Full dates are: London NFT (30 October) — Lunch introduces a collection of Richard Kern New York underground films, then Brighton Lift (1 November), Edinburgh The Venue (2), Glasgow Cat House (3), London Jazz Cafe (5, sponsored by *The Wire*), Dublin Whelans (7). A retrospective compilation of Teenage Jesus & The Jerks, Lunch's first group, is released at the same time on Twisted (through Trident).



PHOTO: MARY SCANLON

Wadaiko Ichiro Drummers Japanese percussion ensemble whose 120 bpm hypnotic, frenzied rhythms, played on the taiko drums, apparently reveal hitherto unknown ancient roots of modern trance music. Catch their athletically choreographed show at Nottingham Royal Centre (7 November), Croydon Fairfield Hall (9), Bradford St George's Hall (10), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (11), Westcliff-On-Sea Cliffs Pavilion (13), Crawley The Hawth (14), Southsea King's Theatre (15), Dartford Orchard (16), Brighton Dome (17), Barnstaple Queen's Theatre (18), Blackpool Grand Theatre (19), Cambridge Corn Exchange (20) and Belfast Festival (22–25).

Invisible String Quartet Dave Draper's brilliant guitar improvisations can be heard alongside a trio of Marcio Mattos, Jim Denley and Nick Couldry in a touring package entitled 'Music Of The Hemispheres'. They travel to Southampton University (1 November, 01703 364161), Colchester Arts Centre (2, 01206 577301), London Jazz Rumours at the Vortex (5, 0171 254 6516), Luton 33 Arts (8, 01582 419584), and Oxford Holywell Rooms (5 December, info 0181 986 1059).

TV & Radio

Soviet Echoes (Channel 4, Sundays from 19 November) Three-part series drawing on thousands of hours of hidden footage from Soviet vaults, rediscovered post-Glasnost, adds up to the widest visual portrait yet of 20th century Soviet musical life.

New York Composers' Orchestra (BBC Radio 3, 4 November, 10.45pm) Wayne Horvitz and Robin Holcomb's 15 piece group recorded in concert.

The Invisible Guru (BBC Radio 3, 12 November, 10pm) Ian Carr's documentary on George Russell, in town this month. Russell's London Jazz Festival performance is broadcast on 18, 10.45pm.

The Music Machine (BBC Radio 3, Monday 27 November–Friday 1 December, 5pm) Tommy Pearson investigates music and the Internet.

Mixing It (BBC Radio 3, Mondays 10.45pm) Mark Russell and Robert Sandall present more genre-busting selections plus focus on African alternative music (13 November) and session from Davey Williams/Oren Marshall/Steve Noble Trio (27).

The Chill Out Zone (Kiss 100 FM Thursdays 1–4am/Sundays 6–7am *The Wire* Sound System (Tony Herrington and Rob Young) joins Paul Thomas to present a special Transgressions sequence (2 November).

Corrections

In last month's Soundcheck, the distributors of two labels were listed incorrectly. Babel is available through Harmonia Mundi, and ASC is handled by New Note/Pinnacle. Apologies for any confusion. □

110 BELOW VOLUME 3

:: NO SLEEVE NOTES REQUIRED

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Berlin

Before Towering Inferno took their monumental show *Kaddish* to Berlin for its two-date German debut at the Haus Der Kultern Der Welt, the group's two central musicians, Andy Saunders and Richard Wolfson, decided to reorganise the visual component of the work. With film maker Arthur Howe, armfuls of wood and several cans of petrol, they struck out for the beaches of Dungeness, and there, beneath the same wide skies that had



sheltered Derek Jarman's garden, set about making — then burning — huge, wooden swastikas and Stars of David, before incinerating a large, dead bush. Tourists and ramblers strolled past, incredulous, but doing nothing. Perhaps they reflected that such happenings are somehow apposite events for sites at the edge of the land, for it is at such perimeters — geographic and otherwise — that forces and ideas become subversive.

Arguably, it is these edges that give Towering Inferno's *Kaddish* such elemental power. Named for the Jewish prayer for the dead, *Kaddish* represents a point where musical strands coalesce: heavy martial percussion, buzz-saw guitars, tugging violin cadenzas, epic, timeless folk song from Hungarian singer Marta Sebestyén, ominous vocal work from poet and text writer Endre Szkarosi which tears through language, and the Hebrew language of the Kaddish itself, rising upwards in all its rounded sobbing. The work of two secular British Jews, *Kaddish* is a multimedia performance that honours not only the Holocaust victims, but also — by intended extension — those who suffer intolerance and suppression under any political regime.

Of course, Berlin, soon to become Germany's capital once more, lies far from any such littoral edges. Yet for any outsider, the city, lying at the heart of central Europe, has an almost mythic resonance. It is a city of confluence: a place dented by the major political, intellectual and artistic developments of the 20th century. Even in modern Berlin, this is clear. The buildings close to Towering Inferno's venue are still pitted with bullet marks from the last days of World War Two, and the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag (recently wrapped up by Bulgarian artist Christo) stand like eerie monoliths in the wastelands that still exist there. A little further away, the Martin Gropius Museum was unveiling a major exhibition that spanned art from constructivism to totalitarianism. Afterwards, one could go round the corner and descend into the cellars of the old Gestapo building. Landmarks, as momenti mori, were everywhere. Small placards erected at the sites of SS round-ups read, 'Vergesst das nie' ('Never forget this'), and in the Haus Der Kultern Der Welt and other venues one could pick up leaflets ("Know your Bundestag") and fat paperbacks containing the articles of the German constitution. The implicit message seemed to be that responsibility is the first duty of citizenship. The underlying anxiety — that political process was once hijacked, and so could be again — is apparent. In no other city is history as inescapable as it is in Berlin.

So what did it mean to hear *Kaddish* played in Berlin itself? When Wolfson, Saunders and group performed in London earlier this year, the show was a critical triumph, sold out. Its ending was greeted by seconds of stunned silence, then wild applause. Not so here. Perhaps the concerts were badly promoted. There had been rumours that Chancellor Kohl and various Jewish community leaders were scheduled to attend. But it turned out that Kohl had merely been invited, and the fact that the second of the group's two concerts (on 1 September, Anti-War Day) was held on a Friday evening (the Jewish Sabbath) militated against any official attendance by the community's luminaries. So the audiences were disappointingly scarce, and the concerts drew, in their endings, long silences rather than ecstatic appreciation.

Why? A partial answer may be found in Towering Inferno's presentation itself. The music, at turns bombastic, elegiac and (when Sebestyén sang) heartbreaking, was synched-up to Howe's films with effective precision. A battery of cine and slide projectors beamed vast images onto three gigantic screens behind the group: swastikas (in Germany, an outlawed symbol), clips from *Triumph Of The Will*, Leni Riefenstahl's notorious and compelling film of a Nazi party congress at Nuremburg, continual pictures of fire, stormtroopers in torchlit parades — the power evoked was, to be painfully honest, seductive. And there lies the unease. If the Nazis understood the power of mass media, of stage management, so too do Towering Inferno. The immense subtlety, even cunning, of *Kaddish* is to seduce us with image and sound and then abandon us to its consequences.

On the day of the second concert, a small protest against the Bosnian war shuffled in drizzling rain through the Brandenburg Gate and up Unter Den Linden — the wide avenue built for triumphal marches — into East Berlin. It was solicitously policed, with outriders giving the protestors right of way. As a political gesture it had little effect, but as a gesture in itself, it was indicative that Germans continue to address their ancestors' moral collapse. In the light of this, did the presence of Towering Inferno rub salt in an open wound? Clearly Saunders and Wolfson are not so presumptious as to offer solutions: their next project, with film director Roman Polanski and with orchestrations from Ennio Morricone, is a staged musical of *Dance Of The Vampires*, and seems bizarrely light-hearted in comparison. But one continually returns to those words, 'Vergesst das nie'. Wounds may heal in time, but scars, as a mark of history on the body politic, are forgotten at our peril.

LOUISE GRAY *Towering Inferno present a revised version of* Kaddish *at London's Shepherds Bush Empire on 3 December.* Kaddish *(the album) is available on Island Records.*



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bites



PHOTO NA ANDERSON

Wayne Shorter

Wayne Shorter is talking about the group he'll be bringing to Europe this month to preview material from *High Life*, his first album in seven years. It's plain from the outset that the enthusiasm he and Joe Zawinul once shared for using Weather Report to showcase younger talent has not diminished. Drummer Will Calhoun, formerly of Living Colour, impresses Shorter for his involvement with what Wayne calls the "modern, contemporary kind of thing" coming out of Brooklyn. He cites M-Base members Cassandra Wilson, Steve Coleman and Gary Thomas as worthy of special interest, and is pleased that Calhoun has brought one of this crew — guitarist David Gilmore (not "the one from Pink Floyd" Shorter points out, helpfully) — into the new group. According to Wayne, Gilmore "admires . . . the virtuosity of John McLaughlin and John Scofield and Mike Stern, but he's looked to add ways of method, of procedure."

Wayne seems pleased that he can push these younger players, and laughs when recalling keyboardist Rachel Z complaining, "My hand doesn't move like this usually." He seems to reserve his greatest respect, though, for producer/bassist Marcus Miller. Shorter laughs as he describes the doyen of contemporary fusion recording parts in a single take, and sight-reading his way through a dozen or more densely-written pages of manuscript at once.

It sounds like *High Life* was produced in a rarefied atmosphere of mutual endeavour and creativity. So why are the end results so bland? *High Life* will be a dream record for producers of drive time AOR radio, but for anyone familiar with Shorter's output over the last 30 years, its unyielding digital surfaces will sound like a considerable step back from the kind of organic fusion he was producing with Miles Davis at the end of the 60s, or as a member of Weather Report in the early 70s. Some of the characteristics of that music were its sense of freedom and improvisation, and the way loose organisational structures were evolved, via collective group action, into complex pools of liquid funk.

By contrast, the tracks on *High Life* sound so rigidly programmed and orchestrated, so locked down, that there's no room to breathe. The only improvisation, the only sense of mobility, comes from Shorter's saxophone playing. "I didn't want any improvisation other than [my own]," he explains. "It's my first record for PolyGram and the consensus was that the focus somehow [needed] to the fact that I am the artist that's being p[romoted] and they didn't want me to bury myself, in my first presentation, in a lot of guest artists, and solos all over the place."

It seems incredible that a musician of Shorter's standing has to leave decisions about his work up to record company 'consensus', but I let it pass. Instead I ask him how he feels today about the music on such epoch making records as *Bitches Brew* and *Super Nova*, *Mysterious Traveller* and *Sweetnighter*. "I look at it, sometimes I listen to it," he says, "and what it means to me is that everyone involved [in that scene] still has a chance — I won't say obligation — as an individual, to take on what they have to as individuals, rather than regrouping. . . The greatest act of preserving something and ensuring the legacy of it is the experience of changing it. That's the legacy: the experience of breakthrough and change and adventure."

I get the feeling this is as far as Wayne wants to take the conversation about the early days of fusion, so we move on to what turns out to be a shared interest, science fiction, and suddenly he's very animated. "I always liked sci-fi. I once drew a sci-fi comic book, 56 pages long; I laminated every page and called it *Other Worlds*. Sometimes I think the future really clarifies the present. Right here on Earth is right here in space," he states, adding, more obliquely, "outward. inward." He's not an adherent of dystopian futurology. Rather, he believes in technology improving people's lives, and explains that *High Life*'s title refers to better lives to be led in the future. "Someday everyone will be an employer, and there will be no employees." He's an optimist, then? "You have to be a prisoner of hope. Better than a prisoner of no hope." **SIMON HOPKINS**

Wayne Shorter plays in the UK this month: see Sounding Off for details. High Life is released on Verve/PolyGram.

Biota

"You can't think about that music. That music is moving [so] that if you think about it, it's like watching a train [go] by and counting the cars." The quote is Captain Beefheart's about his own music — a typically pithy description and a warning against uptight critical dissection. It could also be applied to the very different sounds of Biota.

The Colorado-based group have devised a unique way of working throughout their 16 year existence. They compose and improvise raw material in their own studio, edit it via a painstaking process of tape-splicing



— with the introduction of found sounds where apt — and use this as a foundation for further playing and vocals, by guest musicians including Chris Cutler. On the group's new release *Object Holder*, there are 11 contributors. Pianos, cut-up rhythm tracks, hurdy gurdy, pump organ, guitars and percussion all jostle for place like buskers outside some avant garde carnival in full swing. Hail's Susanne Lewis gives the listener a more direct way in with some beguiling melodies. The process and the resultant music are both long and complex, but it's a complexity that the group's Bill Sharp is keen to demystify.

"It's definitely a romantic way of composition rather than classical," he explains. "As classical composers we would simply be concerned with the individual notes, the arrangements, the intricacies of music theory and how the composition itself is the end. Instead we're working much more in a romantic sense in that it's bringing in all these elements that are not purely musical. It's intentionally designed to be elusive, but it's designed to have enough clues for the listener to not be immediately written off."

This shifting, shuddering music, by turns turbulent and peaceful, is full of colours and odd angles which, like the apparently random fall of the pieces in a kaleidoscope, produce their own logic. The analogy is apt — as well as being influenced by Faust and *musique concrète*, Sharp tends to describe Biota's music in visual metaphors. He explains the importance of a filmic approach to their music making.

"It can start with an idea that is purely visual. Any of our releases could be considered a composition but it's still sub-compositions that are linked together in a linear fashion. And any one of those could be seen by a listener as a series of individual settings or a moving through environments.

"Early in the group's existence we were very interested in what certain film makers were doing with the amplification of location sounds. [David] Lynch and [Alan] Splet, in their work on *Elephant Man*, were taking location sounds and amplifying them and elevating them to an unnatural level and creating musical content out of the environment. They were doing something in a very conscious compositional way to create music out of the visual realm, the setting. And we were interested by how that could be done by a group in the studio. Very early on we were bringing in aspects of the environment as well as standard played instrumentation."

Biota have a separate, but symbiotic visual wing — The Mnemonists — who design all their artwork and contribute when the group make a rare live appearance.

"We did a commission for New Music In America in Montreal in 1990 and we spent a year putting together the stage production," says Sharp. "And when it was executed we did have a multimedia presentation. But we are so linked with the studio in our compositional process it would be very difficult to take it on the road, that's for sure, as most of the studio technology has to come with us." **MIKE BARNES** Object Holder *is available now through ReR*

DJ Crystl

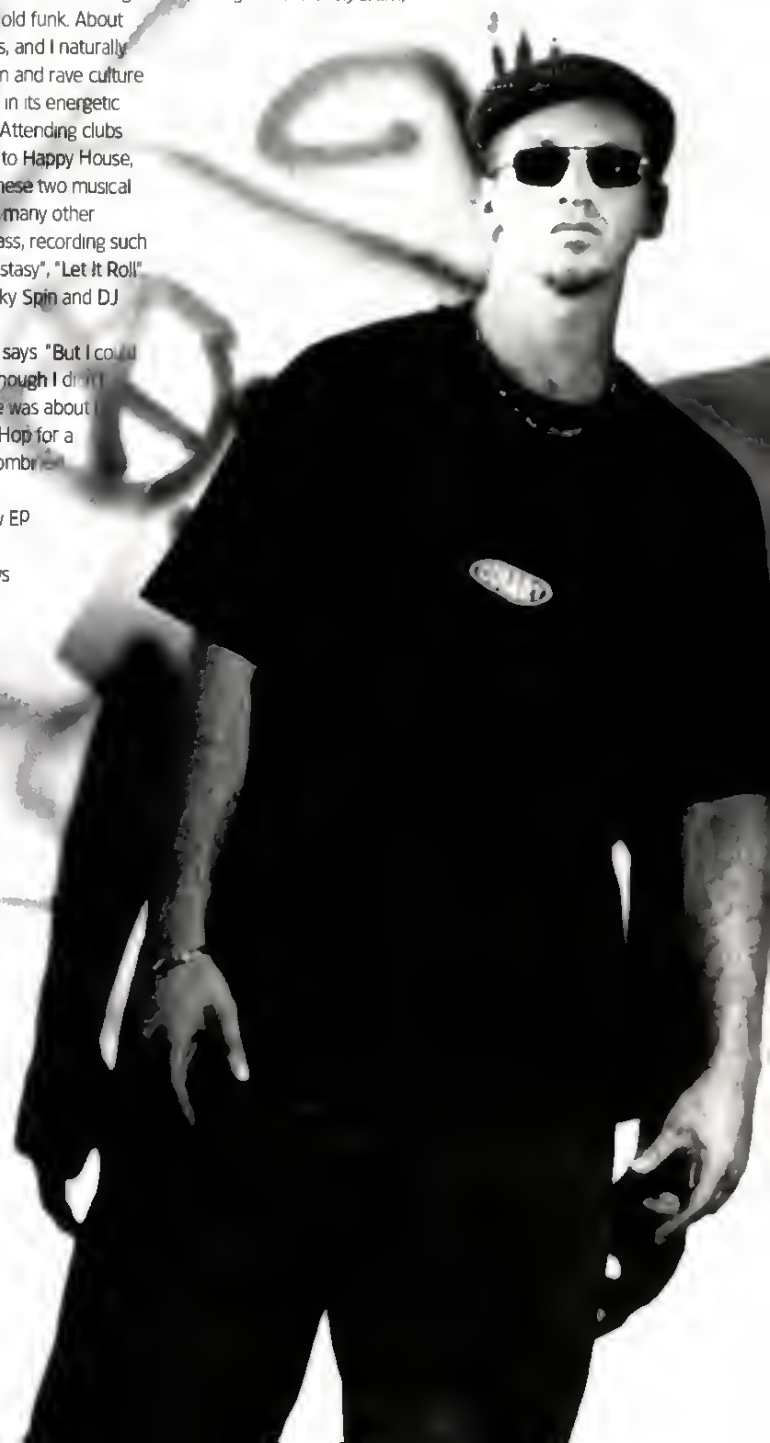
DJ Crystl entered the torrential waters of drum 'n' bass through the tributary of HipHop. As a founder member of The Brotherhood in the early 80s (originally an all-Jewish rap group from the outskirts of North London), he gained an education in breaks, graffiti and breakdancing, learning how to generate the kind of ruptures and stylistic flourishes that he now uses to give his take on drum 'n' bass its dramatic explosiveness.

"I was, and still am, totally into HipHop," says the 23 year old Crystl. "I was DJ Pump Action for The Brotherhood and rap is at the bottom of what I do. I get most of my breaks from HipHop and old funk. About four years ago I started going to raves, and I naturally went into Jungle." As the 80s wore on and rave culture gained momentum Crystl was caught in its energetic whirl of drugs and high speed BPMs. Attending clubs like Phantasy and Rage exposed him to Happy House, Hardcore and Ecstasy. His fusion of these two musical styles, rap and rave, led him, as it has many other artists, into the ferment of drum 'n' bass, recording such epochal tracks as "Suicidal", "Drop Ecstasy", "Let It Roll", "Warpdrive" and "Meditation" (on Lucky Spin and DJ Recordings).

"I couldn't relate to rave at first," he says. "But I could hear the HipHop vibes in there, and though I didn't quite understand what the rave scene was about I really enjoyed it and forgot about HipHop for a while. Now I've come full circle and combined the two."

Combining the two refers to his new EP "Perpetual Motion", which features American rappers Headrush and slows down the drum 'n' bass BPMs to a louche HipHop tempo while retaining the subsonic basslines and futuristic planes of melody that drum 'n' bass has staked for its own. "Perpetual Motion" can best be described as interesting, but the avant garde rarely offers a comfortable ride. A forthcoming album on London Records promises to return Crystl to more familiar ground and a soon to be released retrospective on DJ Recordings will underline what he's already achieved. As well as "Perpetual Motion", a leaning towards that end of the Jungle spectrum which valorises 70s fusion has seen him enter into the stylised grasp of Mo' Wax, remixing DJ Krush's "Meiso".

"This is an experiment," says Crystl of the new EP. "I wanted to fuse drum 'n' bass and rap together. I was bored of run of the mill drum 'n' bass and wanted to do something that would stand out. This is it." **JAKE BARNES** *"Perpetual Motion" is out now on FFRR/Payday (through London/PolyGram).*





Jorge Reyes

"In my town there was not TV until I was 18," says Jorge Reyes, "so the cinema was the window to see and live thousands of adventures. The cinema was my first music school." The imagination somersaults trying to picture the kind of movies that climbed as far as the town of Uruapan, high up in the Mexican sierra. The music they bred in Jorge Reyes is now becoming increasingly audible outside Mexico, via various collaborations with the likes of America's Steve Roach, and the steady output of his own CDs (12 since 1983), the latest of which is a live recording *Mort Aux Vaches*.

Reyes's 1987 album *Comala* is widely regarded among the Mexican-Hispanic scene as a turning point in the transitional motion from tradition-based music to the conscious birthing of a new style. Suffused with stone-chamber reverb and Reyes's descaled, hollow chanting, the record acts as a spirit medium resonating with the cries of Mexico's dead. Is he obsessed with what Doris Stokes called 'the other side'? "I'm not trying to be a nihilist or a pessimist even if I go sometimes into the darker shades of soundscapes and explore the sonority of death as in *Comala*. Music is the way of accepting life and connecting with other realms of existence. All Indians know this: music connects, opens the so-called doors of perception, introduces you to parallel realities."

Reyes experienced a familiar rite of passage for Mexican youths: the bubble of his enchanted childhood in the colourful environment of his village was soon burst when he had to attend school in the city below. To avoid its "conservative hard-hand macho education", he entered music school to study the flute, and discovered Bach and jazz alongside such Western progressive groups as King Crimson and Pink Floyd. Following a trip to India, Reyes started incorporating Mexican drums, stones, turtle shells, seashell trumpets, clay pots, ocarinas and even shamanic singing and body percussion into his music, "without paying much attention to the form, but to the energy released."

Unlike so many European neo-Fourth Worlders with greedy samplers, however, there is a wider agenda behind Reyes's broad sound palette. "[In Mexico] after Columbus, the ancient religions went underground or mixed by force in a syncretic way with Catholic beliefs. New instruments and music came: harps, guitars, violins. Through the missionaries the Indians learned to play them, but adapted this to their own musical vision and needs. Nowadays, ethnic groups play repetitive melodies, strange rhythm patterns and tuning with incredible fantasy and sensibility and a deep religious concept related to the Earth, the old traditions and a magical cosmovision based in dreams, peyote hallucinations and ritual instruments. In this context I have been collecting instruments, learning how to play them, and trying to put it in a new context with samplers, without losing the magical part."

Mort Aux Vaches captures this magic in full flight. Reyes's concerts are often transcendental experiences for him and his audiences, and he has played on the sites of several ancient Mexican ruins. "When the audience listens to the music," he says, "in a full moon night sitting on volcanic stones in a crater, imagination flows, energy awakes, deities arise from the memories." **ROB YOUNG** Mort Aux Vaches *is available on Staalplaat (through SAM/Vital)*

Musa K

"Have you ever been turned on by holding your dick in your hands, squeezing and releasing at sustained intervals?" That's the first line of "Monkey Dread", the opening track on a new record called *Burn By Burn*. It's the debut album by The Otherside, a loose collective of musicians drawn from Africa, Europe and the Caribbean, and fronted by the enigmatic London-based/West African-born poet/rapper/declaimer Musa K. The language on "Monkey Dread" is not used for the notorious effect favoured by so much gangsta rap. "There are people who masturbate, so the parallel I'm trying to draw is that you feel good about doing that," explains Musa. "It's the same way these brothers go out killing in Africa: when you talk to them, you can see on reflection they were pleased about what they were doing. But you also detect a kind of remorse, a guilt somewhere."

Ten years ago, when the notion of World Music was beginning to gain some currency in the UK, Musa and his group African Connexion were in the forefront of London's then-vibrant African music scene. Born in Sierra Leone of Gambian parents, today this published poet ("Let's say it was published in the closing 70s. If I tell you the year, it will highlight my age," he laughs) and qualified sociologist works as a computer technician (and occasional journalist) when not making music.

With such a varied background, it's not surprising that, lyrically, *Burn Baby Burn* is such an articulate, literary and pointedly socio-political work, one which highlights the black experience on the African continent and in Europe. The record is produced and co-written by David Toop, Musa's long term musical collaborator, and he has crafted a series of spectral Afro-funk backings to support Musa's graphic, conversational monologues.

Songs like "Roadblock" and "Forgive And Forget" concentrate on South Africa. The latter is critical of President Mandela. In the mid-80s, Musa released a 60th birthday tribute to Mandela, but now he feels the South African president has made too many concessions since turning from prisoner to head of state. "I think Mandela tends to put aside the suffering of many people, including himself, to basically get the programme going and to minimise an exodus of white South Africans from the country."

Musa looks to the likes of Gil Scott-Heron, The Last Poets, post-war bluesmen and iconoclasts like Fela Kuti for inspiration. Closer to home, on "Giovanni's Room", he mixes the gay sexuality of literary figures such as James Baldwin and Langston Hughes with a criticism of the present Tory rule. "I tried to liken those writers, who had what they wanted to say controlled, to here in the UK where there are gay people. I know quite a number of them who cannot express themselves because of government hypocrisy, ie the law, even though many of those in Parliament are bisexual or straight-out gays. They go out in the evening to do their thing, then the next day they make a law that constrains people's lives." **KWAKU** Burn Baby Burn *is out now on Jungle Rendez-Vous Records (through Jetstar)*



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occult personality

Peter Frohmader's Gothic sound collages represent some of the scariest music to emerge from post-Industrial Germany. Paul Stump steps into his parlour

The surprises are only just beginning when I first meet Peter Frohmader. The doom-laden and tenebrous clangour of his heaven-storming and grandiloquent music — Messiaen for the post-Industrial age? Electronic Scriabin? — doesn't square with his genial and welcoming thirtysomething persona. Nor does his house, a modest post-war pastel villa in the Munich suburbs (which both within and without resembles a showhouse from a 50s Ideal Home Exhibition), quite match the temper of the Gothic terrors recorded there in Frohmader's studio.

"It isn't much, really," says Frohmader, leading me to the first-floor nerve centre of his Nekropolis Music Organisation. He's right. The studio is basically a kid's back-bedroom, which great banks and cliffs of menacing black electronic hardware have greedily colonised, as though multiplying like fungi. "All my recording is done in here," Frohmader tells me, blithely. "Any session men, drummers, violinists, whatever, they have to play on the landing."

Cottage Industrial? Maybe. But this grassroots creativity has nonetheless given rise to some of the most ambitious and compositionally complex modern Electronica. The hallmark of Frohmader's music is a disciplined and instinctive sense of formal architecture, unique at the rock end of the electronic music genre which he says he *is* proud to inhabit. Given his phenomenal output (25 albums since 1980) and tendency to gigantism (*Homunculus*, his 1985 masterpiece, recently reissued on Multimood, lasts 92 minutes in performance), plus the innumerable sonic and visual ciphers of Central European culture bristling all over his work, does he see himself as a descendent of the German symphonic tradition of Brahms, Bruckner, Mahler *et al*?

"I'm not that interested in that kind of music — some Wagner, some Mahler, yes, but my music is, I like to think, a new kind of personal orchestral music based on my own individual experiments with electronics. Yes, I like working on a big scale — big scores, long pieces — but don't forget, I have released a *Miniatures* CD — everything between three and eight minutes."

The stereotype of Frohmader's Teutonic grimness seems to be lurking once more when he lists more contemporary proponents of his style. "Early Darmstadt-era Stockhausen, Ligeti, Penderecki — very atmospheric music." For all Frohmader's apparent Germanic and Mitteleuropean intensity, his current professional leanings are startlingly Francophile. "If I had to choose anyone to work with it would be Art Zoyd, maybe even Christian Vander of Magma. Bernard Szajner — now there's a fine, a very underrated French synthesist. Not to mention Heldon, Richard Pinhas."

These members of France's Prog rock movement are largely improvisational players. Doesn't that jar with Frohmader's own through-composed vision of music? "There's a heavy improvisational streak in much of the music I grew up with. I started listening to Klaus Schulze, Tangerine Dream, Ash Ra Tempel in 1971, when I was just 12. There was a kind of aleatory, haphazard feel to a lot of that music then. But now I prefer to leave improvisation for stage work. I used to play guitar in various space rock bands, and I still have a three piece line-up, where I can stretch out and improvise on stage — I like to think I can introduce a kind of free jazz element into that too."

Elsewhere, however, Frohmader has a grander vision. "I use samplers to imitate orchestral sounds — but far from being synthetic, just an imitation, I like that synthetic quality — it's *good* sometimes for electronic samples to have their own unique textures, their own unique qualities. *Homunculus*, I hope, shows that. It sounds both organic and simultaneously mechanical, manufactured — and there's nothing wrong with that."

Does he believe himself to be, like so many of the musicians he worshipped in his youth — Kraftwerk, most specifically — a component of Germany's post-war economic miracle, an artistic by-product of the steelworks, the heavy industry, the electronics? "Hardly at all. I'm not a technology freak. All this equipment is simply a means to an end."

Frohmader paints, with the same passion and prodigality that informs his music making. He specialises in outlandish fantasies, livid and ventricular forms lit by fibre optic inner phosphorescences. "Both my music and painting are unique but mutually influential. Both have the same inspiration — occult themes, fear, terror, joy, ecstasy. Very old, elemental themes. And yes, my music is representational of that also — but representation is not the be-all and end-all of why I compose."

This kind of illustrative technique is, he seems aware, the point where his image matches the spooky reality. His representational forms, if not his language, do have a heritage. This immense empathy with emotional extremes, or rather with their depiction and sublimation, locates Frohmader in a Central European Gothic tradition. It comes as no surprise to learn of his past collaborations with the Swiss graphic artist HR Giger, best known for designing the sets for Ridley Scott's *Alien*. "I collaborated with Giger on some soundtracking of fantasy films and videos. He heard my first LP [1980's *Nekropolis Aus Dem Schattenreich*, or *Necropolis In The Land Of Shadows*] and contacted me immediately, saying that my music seemed the perfect counterpoint to his images."

Frohmader is currently engaged in re-re-reading Gustav Meyrink (of *Der Golem* fame), and stores in his garage over 1000 films of varying degrees of bizarrerie, all meticulously transferred to labelled videos. If anything is key in Frohmader's vision, it's this visceral drive, this intent to unsettle the emotions. Have any film directors beaten a path to Frohmader's door? "A few. But not as many as I'd like. Of course, all composers say that," he says with a grin. "David Lynch. I'd love to work with. Or Neil Jordan — *The Company Of Wolves*, great film. My favourite films are Hammer movies — and those of Murnau and Fritz Lang. The only problem is, they're no longer in the position to commission me for soundtracks."

It's got dark suddenly. I tense for thunder, the groaning of chains, the eldritch creak of a dungeon door. Instead the kettle boils. My host smiles. "More coffee?" □

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screen ceremonies

David Toop talks to Tony Herrington about his new solo album, the first release on The Wire Editions label

"It's up to you how much you get into this," says David Toop halfway through a two and a half hour phone conversation in which we attempt to pull apart the music on his forthcoming album *Screen Ceremonies*, "but for me it's unavoidable."

Screen Ceremonies is David's first solo album, as well as the initial release on The Wire Editions, the new label launched this month by *The Wire*. Already in the course of the conversation we have inched our way through many of the ideas that lie behind the music. These are predictably diverse and fascinating: the possibilities engendered by combining extreme music technologies, from bamboo percussion to hard-disk editing, the abiding influence of John Barry and the notion of electronic soul music, the attraction of the kind of ersatz forms of melodrama and hyper-emotion present in 50s sci-fi, 60s surf guitar, the exotica movement, Hollywood fantasy and adventure movies, the conflicting emotions and traditions encoded in the dying weep of a pedal steel guitar, the dream theories of writer James Hillman, Victorian spiritualism, a musical career that spans two decades and collaborations with Brian Eno, John Zorn and Steven Berkoff as well as ethnographic field recordings and a stint in art school.

But now, for David, we have reached the dark heart of the matter: the suicide earlier this year of his wife, the journalist Kimberley Leston.

"If I talk about theories of technology, it's stuff that is interesting and part of what I'm doing, but I can't get away from the fact that the record was researched and produced at a time when I was going through emotional hell.

"When you experience death, the first thing that happens is you go into some kind of altered state — you're not part of the world at all. Everything is unreal. It's so savage, and you feel so raw, going back and forth between extreme emotional states. And it's not that the music on the record is crazy, unfettered, emotional outpourings — it's not, in a way it's very controlled. But to me it's very emotional, not all of it, some of it is about other things."

For David, the notion of the screen ceremony arose partly out of the circumstances surrounding the aftermath of his wife's death.

"Since my early twenties I've been interested in the ideas of rituals, and suddenly I was plunged right into them: you have to confront what death means to you — are the rituals you go through adequate or not? — and then you have to make your own, it's the only way you can get through it. Bereavement is bad enough, but a suicide brings out so much unconscious material to deal with, and you have to find ways — rituals — of dealing with it, otherwise you'll go crazy.

"The album is partly about the extent to which ceremonies and rituals have become mediated, and a funeral is no exception. If you let people do a funeral as they would like to, in the most mess-free way possible, you come out feeling completely distanced from the whole event, like nothing's happened, and it's devastating: it's like a screen between you and what you are feeling.

"It also relates to the importance of screens in our lives — cinema, TV, computer — and also goes back to those archaic rituals where screens were erected and things happened secretly behind them."

This refers in part to the secret ceremonies and rituals of Buddhist monks recorded in Nara, Japan by Yoshihiro Kawasaki. On *Screen Ceremonies*, David applies the monks' "non-musical organisation of sound" to his own music, using it as an organising principle on the track "Butoh-Porno".

"Kawasaki said it all happens behind screens. It's very mysterious, you don't know what's going on: you see shadows, hear people running around in sandals, closing books loudly, there's a brief passage of music, someone shuffling around, then someone blows a conch shell or starts chanting. Well, that's very interesting, but it seems that those kind of screens, invisible screens, are erected now in rituals here and they distance us because no one knows how to deal with big life events anymore — it's a secular society, it's all in the hands of counsellors now. There is the feeling that you can drift through all this stuff and not let it touch you. But if you do that it does terrible damage deep down that you're barely aware of till years later.

"So I can't separate this album from all the things I've been through this year. There are sections where things are put together that shouldn't go together, for instance on "Reverse World", which is very feverish, like some kind of mad ceremony, but is in fact lots of tiny, strange instruments sampled and looped, with a John Barry vibrato guitar over the top and then a very distorted guitar echoing what I'm playing with the vibrato. These elements are unrelated, which is just what my life feels like: dealing with very profound, shattering events, but having to keep the mundane day-to-day activities going at the same time.

"Music can help guide you through difficult developments in your life," he says later. "It can be a focal point that can reveal your own feelings to you. That's incredibly valuable. But there is a coolness about so much [electronic] music: a lot of it is driven by fantasies of the future, or reflections of the technological present, but the emotional palette is very limited. It's important to me to disrupt that, because it doesn't answer enough needs. Maybe that's because I'm older: I'm 46, like most people my age I've been through a lot of shit: relationship breakdowns, deaths, disasters. These things carry a cumulative weight and you need stuff which has a lot of different dimensions to it as your life gets more complicated.

"The music on the album is very diverse, and it's interesting to work in areas that are anti-uniform. A lot of what I hear now moves through from beginning to end without disturbing the flow, the emotional flow, whatever. I wanted to play with the idea of having things that are very sparse and very thick, that were either light or relentless. My year has been about incredible highs and unimaginable lows, so it's to do with life being a mixture of opposites: the banal and the profound, happy and despairing, sane and mad." □ Screen Ceremonies *will be released on 20 November by The Wire Editions (through SAM/Vital). David Toop's new book,* Ocean Of Sound, *is published later this month by Serpent's Tail (reviewed in Print Run, page 70).*

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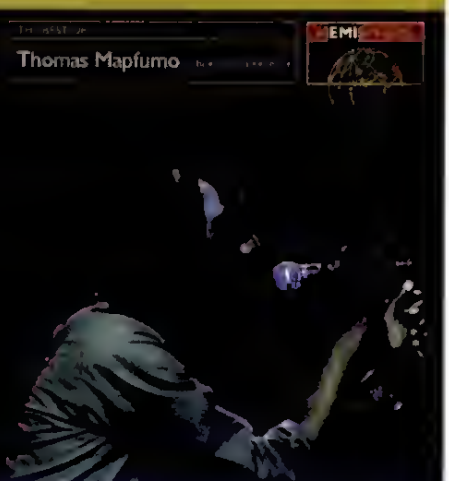
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poppy culture

Forget **Andrew Poppy**'s stint as the ZTT label's resident systems music scientist — these days he's a fully-fledged opera composer. Interview by Nick Kimberley

"All anybody ever wants to ask me about," complains Andrew Poppy ruefully, "is when I was with ZTT." An understandable complaint: Poppy spent a couple of years, 1985 to 1987, signed to Trevor Horn's label, sharing the stable with Frankie Goes To Hollywood. He's done plenty of other things, before and since. Yet a composer signed to a pop label, that's a 'Man Bites Dog' story, the more so ten years ago than now, when composers have become comparatively sexy.

Poppy marks out his own territory in the classical music business, refusing to recognise barriers between complexity and accessibility, intellect and emotion. Unlike most composers, he has no publisher, which is how he ended up at ZTT's door. "In the early 1980s I was trying to work out ideas about the contradictions between the art tradition, and things that come from popular culture. On the one hand, I'm a composer, I put dots on paper and traditionally trained musicians play them. On the other hand, I also work with computers, in a studio, and I like multi-tracking the sound. Because of that, I didn't take my scores to publishers, I took my recordings to record companies, and Trevor Horn and Paul Morley at ZTT liked what they heard."

ZTT released two records, *Alphabed* and *The Beating Of Wings*, which, Poppy says, "presented a number of concert works, exploring pop production techniques using electronics and computer controls." Since then, his career has been as varied as you could wish: he has written film scores and ballet scores, and operas for the Royal Opera House Garden Venture and the Royal National Theatre, he has provided incidental music for several plays, taught at the National Film & Television School, performed as a solo pianist, and composed concert works.

Poppy's latest project is another opera, *Ophelia/Ophelia*, with text adapted from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. For now, this is not an opera you'll see in any theatre, except the theatre of your own imagination. Rather than wait for a commission, Poppy has written the piece and then produced a recording, which he has licensed to Impetus. As he says, "Doing the recording myself is part of a strategy, the first stage of the production process. It's a way of saying, 'This is the work, this is how we want to stage it: what we need is the finance.' To finance a single theatrical performance would have cost more than it cost to produce the CD."

That doesn't mean that the recording is simply a calling card: it *is* the opera, insists Poppy. "A recording is not like listening to the music in a *performance* space, nor is it like reading a film script, which is in effect totally empty. Opera has to be complete at the musical level, the music has to contain everything. I would like to work on a larger scale, but there's no point in saying, 'I'm going to write an opera for full orchestra, chorus and five soloists' if it's just going to sit in the drawer. So I decided to write something that I can deal with myself, that I can realise at some level."

Ophelia/Ophelia reduces resources to a single female voice (Margaret Cameron), occasionally singing against its pre-recorded self, support provided by one clarinettist (Roger Heaton) and Poppy himself on keyboards, percussion and samples. Eminently practical, eminently portable, and Poppy goes one further to entice potential investors: "I've written an introduction where I suggest different possibilities for staging it: one of the ways of retaining control over a piece is to allow lots of space for ways of realising it. So *Ophelia/Ophelia* could be quite static, like an installation but with a real theatrical dimension: just the singer, everything else pre-recorded. Or it could be at the other end of the scale, with the other characters from Hamlet represented by mute performers, as if Ophelia is the only character in Technicolour, everyone else is in monochrome."

Ophelia/Ophelia is emphatically not incidental music for a staging of *Hamlet*. It's an opera in its own right, at the same time providing a commentary on a cornerstone of Western theatrical history: "I remember when I was a student trying to take a piece of this rich text and work with it. Then a couple of years ago, I worked on a production of *Macbeth*, a very musical production with music nearly all the way through. That rekindled the *Hamlet* idea. I like the idea of a fragment, and at first I had the idea of only using Hamlet's soliloquies, but that seemed an obvious way to go. Then I decided to make the piece about Hamlet's foil in the play, who is Ophelia. In the play, her space is so limited. Almost all the time she is being asked to respond to questions, they are what frame her. In my opera, you get Ophelia's responses, but she is isolated within herself, the character is broken open so as to have a life beyond the narrative, ultimately the life of the music."

The results are characteristically stark and direct, yet [illegible] ious and elusive. The [illegible] a [illegible]ing; as Poppy says, "Lots of [illegible] does [illegible] two speakers. Yet [illegible] opera's theatr[illegible] ar[illegible] not [illegible]ically defined. Whether [illegible] are taken up [illegible] to be [illegible] The [illegible]rati[illegible] mat[illegible] Poppy admits, may not be favour[illegible] ch[illegible] work. Everything is [illegible] by the need to [illegible] every [illegible]y. Opera is [illegible] at a certain [illegible], but [illegible] fashionability is a [illegible]-edged sword: [illegible] fashionable as high camp [illegible]. Obviously [illegible] a is [illegible], but I'm not sure how much interest there is in trying to generate [illegible] at what opera really is."□

Ophelia/Ophelia is available through Impetus.



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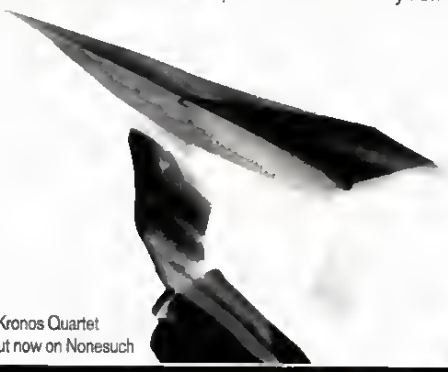
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VITAL

Latin music might actually resemble its popular image as exotic party music were it nor for the **Eddie Palmieri**. In New York, Howard Mandel hears the Bronx bandleader explain how salsa impact art music, and why he made a live album in America's most notorious jail

fortunate

Whatever kind of reception or reputation Afro-Caribbean jazz — also known as salsa, rumba, Latin or Nuyorican dance music and a lot more besides — enjoys elsewhere, at home in New York its urbane and romantic machismo, founded in a street-tough virtuosity and implacable clavé rhythm, puts it at the core of one of the hippest scenes city-wide. Many Westerners still ghettoise Latin music as an exotic party soundtrack — which proves they ain't been listening right.

Sure, good times are to be had by dressing the best you can to join faultlessly stylish Latin lover types at public weekend parties where they spin with practised and (by early morning) *abandoned* grace, speed and fluidity — while soloists spiral through innovative arrangements with lyrical, harmonious joy, and percussionists carve up time with laser precision. Take your date to a ballroom where the floor's slick and the linen clean. Buy a 'set-up' fifth of good rum, ice bucket and glasses. The night will be fabulous.

But know there's nothing superficial in all this. You've come to a cultural event, a community fete which beyond all intimations of fateful assignation has myriad socio-politic-spintual implications. As in a gospel church, you're one with the congregation, as in an intimate jazz club, there's a feedback loop between players and listeners. Furthermore, you find yourself on the cutting edge of a highly evolved art music that proposes near-deadly challenges, embraces and transcends dramatic dissonances, builds to glorious climaxes and won't stop twirling, spinning, *moving*.

Just like Eddie Palmieri, who today, at the age of 60, is still 'the Sun of Latin Music', the enfant terrible of an idiom he refuses to be confined or otherwise limited by and so continuously redefines. Latin jazz is a recording industry genre in which Palmieri's been awarded five Grammies, yet seeks to have reappraised. This composer, group leader, pianist, onstage madman, fabled studio profligate, font of boundless enthusiasm, energy and vision never seems to settle or to tire. *"Eddie Palmieri,"* announcer Joe Gaines exults on *Live At Sing Sing*, the 1972 album which Palmieri and his group Harlem River Drive recorded inside one of America's most notorious prisons. *"Nobody cooks like* that, *man!"* And it's still true today.

"Ours is the Afro-Caribbean jazz world," Palmieri insists, and so in 1994 he convinced the governing board of the National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) to distinguish it from the Grammies' Latin Pop and Tropical categories. That was the year Palmieri's *Palmas* came out on Warner's in-house art music imprint Elektra Nonesuch, without tipico Spanish (or any other language) vocalists present. *Arete*, the follow up to *Palmas*, has just been released in the US on the CBS/Sony distributed Tropijazz label. And Palmieri's finally coming to perform in London this month.

"Afro-Canbbean is the fundamental," he continues, "but the music is derivative since we were weaned from Cuba before the umbilical cord was cut in the 60s, and jazz influenced Cuba before then, and jazz was influenced by the Cuban structures as well, plus there's my own little-by-little comprehension, appreciation and acknowledgement of jazz. I preferred Afro-Caribbean musical structures to jazz for years, but found they had to be equally met to lead me into the albums I'm recording now!"

The music on *Palmas* and *Arete* isn't so different to that which he was making when he broke out from the legendary Palladium dancehall in the late 50s and early 60s with his two-trombone group La Perfecta. Palmieri's sound has always been quicker, wittier, brassier, more dense, improvisational and ambitious than even the finest conventional Latin orchestras — those of his late brother Charlie Palmieri, Tito Rodriguez, Machito and Mario Bauza, Tito Puente, Johnny Pacheco — all of which he reveres. *Arete* abounds in son montuno piano figures that develop into tumbling, atonal McCoy Tyner-influenced piano solos, deftly voiced trumpet/trombone/sax fanfares that explode into personal statements with real bite, percussion conversations whose pointed flux and flow lends waltzes and ballads, as well as up-tempo tracks, startling depth and flavour.

"We set a precedent for extending the most incredible rhythmical patterns in the world — 40,000 years old! From the continent of Africa!"

In conversation, Palmieri talks like he makes music, adding one idea to another until the accretion of fact and opinion makes his message irrefutable — and if it isn't, he emphasises it with breathlessness and ends many of his sentences with exclamations! His current group features a number of New York-based jazz players — Bryan Lynch, Donald Harrison, Conrad Herwig — in tandem with congero Richie Flores, timbalero Jose Claussell, bassist John Benitez, bongoist Paoli Mejias and drummer Adam Cruz. "My exciting dance rhythm section," as Palmieri refers to them. "All totally integrated!

"It's not like, 'OK, we're doing an Afro-Caribbean jazz record, but no bongo player, I'll only use the timbales sometimes, the conga player will meet the jazz drummer,'" he continues. "No! That's not what we're doing! We set a precedent for extending the most incredible rhythmical patterns in the world — 40,000 years old! From the continent of Africa! Carried on by a culture that's two-to-one African to Spanish —

radical innovations of musicians like
evolved from prehistoric Africa into today's high-

sun



because before the Spanish brought blacks to the Caribbean by force, they were influenced by the Moors for 1000 years — that's where they saw the hand drum, where they got the intermix of marriage and colours! That's why the most incredible rhythmic scales come out of Cuba!"

Cuba. That's perhaps where Palmieri's music began (although he was born in The Bronx, New York's Spanish Harlem), but not where it ends.

"My brother was my inspiration," he explains, referring to Charlie, whose early 60s group Duboney instigated a sonic revolution in Latin New York, by replacing salsa's standard frontline instruments — saxophones and brass — with flutes and violins, and introducing, in the words of critic John Storm Roberts, "a classicism of sound and form that gave [Duboney] a unique grace and freedom."

"I was classically trained by a Miss Margaret Bonds, a great teacher who's in the Negro history books," Eddie continues, "and when I was 11 years old I gave a recital at Carnegie Recital Hall — but I didn't follow that kind of training, so I never call myself a pianist.

"I've always had *aspirations*, you know, to develop more and more, which I'm doing now changing my technique, and listening only to classical music 24 hours a day." For a recent performance, Palmieri prepared a Latin jazz arrangement of a Bach Partita. Regrettably, the promise of that piece went unfulfilled when Palmieri became absorbed introducing it with an anecdote so lengthy it cut into precious performance time.

"You see," he says not boastfully but with profound equanimity, "I don't *guess* I'm going to excite you, I *know* I'm going to excite you. It's because of structures that I sacredly maintain which are Afro-Cuban. Those structures [ie the repertoire of

rhythmic principles and syncopations that underpin salsa and which are drawn from Yoruba religious rites brought from Africa to the New World centuries ago] deliver tension and resistance leading to the climax in every composition. I knew it intuitively in my early years: all the different structures follow the same pattern, which always delivers that climax.

"No matter if I have a charanga [flute and violin] band or a big orchestra like Benny More's or a [brass-heavy] conjunto like Arsenio Rodriguez's — he's the one who started this movement — I keep those structures sacred. For the last ten years during which I've orchestrated and arranged myself, I've never changed. I've just looked to extend it more.

"How can you extend it? Through jazz harmony. I was fortunate to be introduced to jazz harmonies and the Schillinger method by my teacher, the late Mr Bob Bianco, who [trombonist] Barry Rogers took me to in 1965. Since then I've had the most incredible personnel on every album I've recorded, and they provide the *quality* of my albums."

As Palmieri points out, and this is also true of every great group leader from Miles Davis to Sun Ra, the success of his music has hinged partly on his ability to fill his groups with some of the most forward thinking and adventurous musicians and arrangers working within Latin music. He's proud that such emerging Latin jazz stars as trumpeter Charlie Sepulveda, saxophonist David Sanchez and congero Giovanni Hidalgo have been among his recent proteges. Through the years he's associated with some of Latin music's most progressive spirits: vibist Cal Tjader, saxophonist Ronnie Cuber, brothers Jerry and Andy Gonzalez (ex-members of the *truly* legendary Grupo Folklorico Y Experimental Nueva Yorquino, long term collaborators with Kip Hanrahan and latterly of The Fort Apache Band), timbalero Nicky Marrero, Cuban violinist Alfredo De La Fe, Machito's old arranger Rene Fernandez, as well as great Latin vocalists including Cheo Feliciano, Ishmael Quintana, Lalo Rodriguez as well as La India, the cigar-smoking diva who's the rage of Latin New York and who Palmieri discovered and recorded with five years ago on the album *Llego La India*.

But, as Palmieri concedes, his Latin singers are utilised primarily as draws for his Spanish-speaking core audience. His own personal fascination is with instrumental innovation and extra-musical concerns.

It's become a cliche to refer to salsa's Golden Age as the years spanning the late 60s and early 70s: a cliche but also a truism. During that period, Palmieri, Willie Colón, Rafel Cortijo, Randy Ortiz, Ricardo Marrero and a handful of others blew apart Latin music's strict genre conventions, introducing a dizzying array of external elements (from psychedelia through European chamber music to black R&B and political consciousness) into a music that was rhythmically sophisticated and harmonically complex, which blended emotional states, from euphoria to high melodrama, and which remained both funky and cerebral.



Eddie and Charlie Palmieri

As far as Eddie Palmieri's contribution to this period of sustained creative endeavour is concerned, the evidence is still there for anyone who cares to examine it: the live jams before cheering prisoners documented on *Live At Sing Sing*, the iconoclastic piano introduction to "Adoracion" which opens 1973's *Sentido* album, the imaginative orchestrations and electronic treatments of his 1974 apotheosis *The Sun Of Latin Music*, or his ambitious 1978 would-be crossover album for Epic, *Lucumi Macumba Voodoo*.

Asked to look back at any of his past, Palmieri bubbles with fresh excitement, but won't dwell there for long. "Well, *Live At Sing Sing* was about the moment and the movement — the silent camaraderie we had at that time. I'd just finished recording *Justice* [1969], which went into the political economy of Henry Georg and what is liberty, where is justice, the imbalance of immense wealth side by side with immense poverty. At the time I was associating myself with members of [Hispanic New York street gang] the Young Lords — and I took it upon myself to play the prisons with no monetary exchange, with my brother and other musical guests, partly because one of our drivers was incarcerated and we wanted to play for him. I also played Attica, prisons in Columbia and Puerto Rico, and later I played for the Cuban refugees — Marielitos — when they were imprisoned — that's what it amounted to — in Arkansas. All those concerts were quite special.

"And, to me, "Adoracion" is such a beautiful composition, built on the cycle of *fifths*, it just blends so wonderfully on the record with the piano flowing to Andy Gonzalez, who went on the natural harmonics of his bass."

"But, you know," he says, returning to the present, "we're not just jazz players — I'm talking about specifically me, I am not a jazz piano player. I don't want to be judged as a jazz piano player against a mentor of mine like Mr McCoy Tyner, or a Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea. But I'm certainly an Afro-Caribbean jazz pianist because of my comprehension of the rhythm patterns that are the most complex in the world. And I know the jazz musicians — drummers, bassists, horn players — are intrigued by that, as we're intrigued by their comprehension of harmonic structures, how they apply attack in their playing, their variations and improvisations on given themes and scales.

"You see, the last ten years have been disastrous to our dance form," Palmieri contends, "with a lot of conventional Latin orchestras disregarding the structures I'm talking about so you can die of boredom dancing to them. There's no excitement, the whole focus is on the singer, the music's anti-climactic — and to me that's the worst sin, because the essence of a Latin dance orchestra is to bring happiness to those who brought those rhythms and scales out of their historic sorrows.

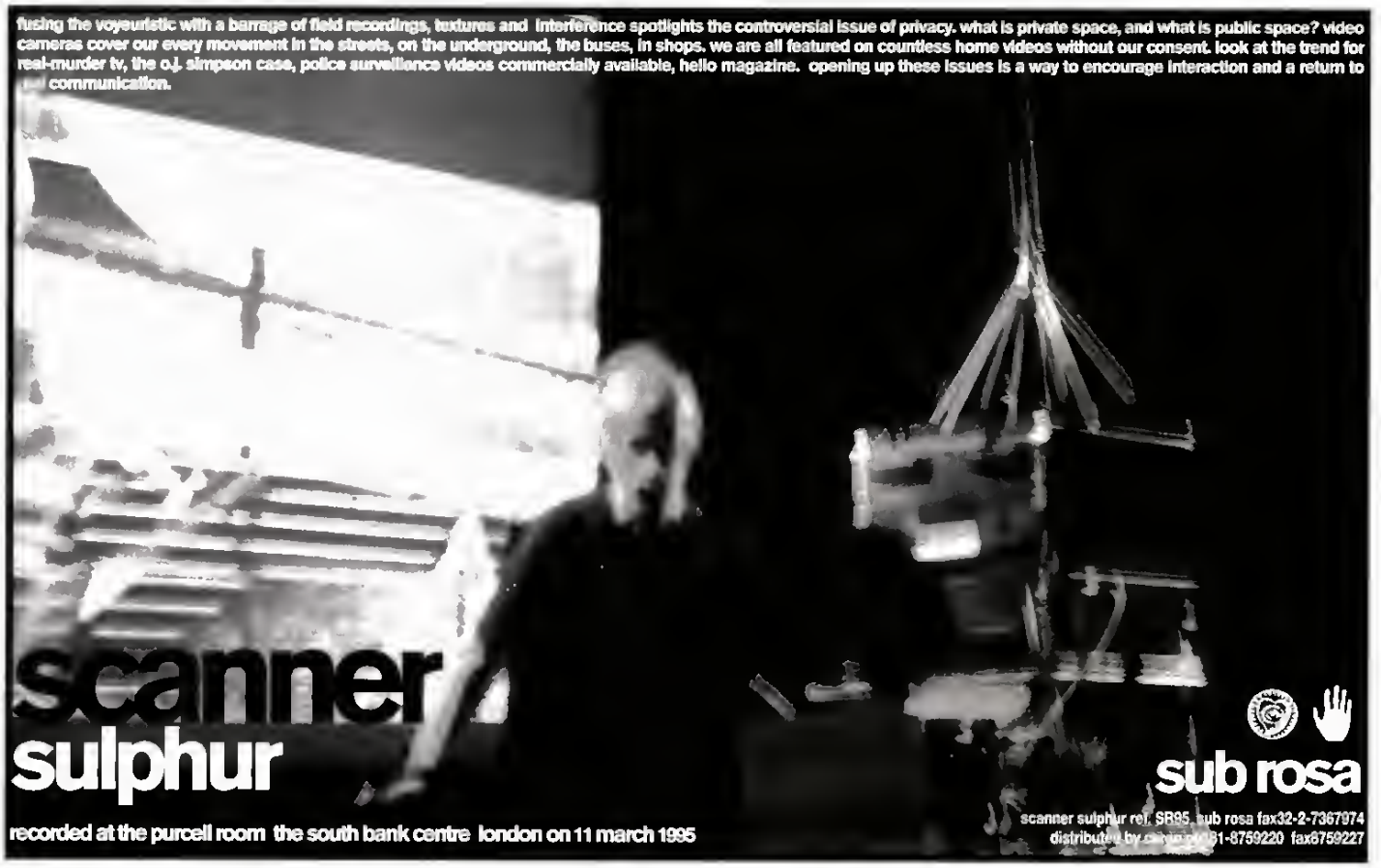
"You know, 11 and a half million blacks were brought to North America by force, and many were not allowed their drums, the only drums they knew were the military drums, so that's how vocal blues developed. In Cuba the men worked all day at the waterfront, carrying hundreds of bags of sugar and tobacco every day, and after 16 hours of that, when a man came home he grabbed his drum and [here Palmieri lifts his voice to quote a classic Afro-Caribbean cadence] he starts singing his rumba, his plena — that was his moment to forget all he'd gone through.

"So now when I come to perform with my orchestra, I have the thought stored in me that those dancers are out there and while I'm playing they're going to forget everything that's troubling them and they'll laugh for that moment or that hour that they listen to me or dance to me — I'm going to make sure of that. In my opinion, they don't forget, or laugh — can't do that — with the structures most Latin dance bands are playing now.

"In a way the dancer is the real enemy — that's how it was when the music started in Cuba, when the music imitated the dance of the rooster and the chicken. When I came in on the tail end of the Palladium era, we were one-on-one with dancers who were so well versed they were our challenge. It was between them and you. You wanted to get them to sweat so they would say at the end of an evening, 'Oh, Eddie, that was terrific, you knocked me out!'

"When I heard that, I knew I'd satisfied the dancing part of the listening audience. When I hear that today, because of music we play — ah, then my soul is elated!" □

Eddie Palmieri performs at London's Jazz Cafe on 1-2 November.


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The spent forces of Grunge and lo-fi are giving way to a new impulse in **American post-rock**. Groups such as Tortoise, Labradford, Stars Of The Lid, Ui and Sabalon Glitz are rewiring rock according to the legacies of European space rock, avant jazz and Ambient sound design. Report by Simon Reynolds

back to the future

Back in the late 80s, the smartest British groups took their cue and their clues from the US noise underground — from groups like Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr, Big Black and Butthole Surfers, and from labels like Homestead, SST and Touch & Go. American rock's intuitive, unself-conscious approach seemed infinitely preferable to the 'English disease' (preciousness and premeditation, our crippling flair for concept, manifesto and self-salesmanship). More to the point, American underground rock — from Sonic Youth's 'reinvention of the guitar' to the Buttholes' resurrection of wigged-out late 60s Acid rock — sounded so much bigger and better than our own stunted and runt-like indie fare.

But in 1995, nobody in Britain is looking to America for anything. From the retro-parochialism of Britpop to the future-orientation of post-rock, the UK has never been more out of synch with what's happening in the USA. In the mainstream of MTV, 'modern rock' radio and *Billboard* charts, Grunge still rules, a full four years on from Nirvana's breakthrough. The big sellers and emerging contenders in the 'Alternative' racks are all groups that are virtually unknown in the UK, groups with music as drab and prosaic as their names: Jawbreaker, Sponge, Korn, Candlebox, Silverchair, Googoo Dolls, Better Than Ezra, Knapsack, Filter, Rotator Cuff.

What about the indie sector? Stunned by the speed and thoroughness with which the record industry co-opted ('mainstreamed') the entire late 80s Amerindie ensemble of stylistic traits, tropes and attitudes, the underground has struggled to find a way forward, to revive *la difference*. Lo-fi was its first response, and a weak one, since lo-fi is just Grunge with even grungier production values. If Grunge is created by and for bum-outs (ie kids who were born to lose), lo-fi is by and for slackers (post-graduates who choose to lose). This class factor explains why lo-fi's version of the twentysomething blues is more irony-clad than Grunge's earnest, artless passion, and why lo-fi's reference points are more arcane (the perennial bourgeois-bohemian desire to distance oneself from the herd). And so we get Pavement & Co's entertaining but ultimately inconsequential reconfigurations of the underground canon of Beefheart/The Fall/Can/Faust, as opposed to Grunge's Black Sabbath/Black Flag/Husker Du matrix.

As the ersatz folk culture of fanzine editors and 'used vinyl' store clerks, lo-fi was always going to turn out to be an aesthetic and cultural dead-end. Like, I suspect, a lot of Brits, I'd more or less stopped keeping tabs on it by last year: with all manner of post-rock, TripHop, drum 'n' bass and art-Techno provocations afoot, who could be bothered tracking lo-fi's latest miniscule permutations on the canon of avant-garage rock? But listen again — that strange rustling sound is the furious cogitation of a new breed of American underground groups who are struggling to think their way past the impasse of lo-fi's retro-eclecticism. Groups who have reached or are verging on a distinctively American post-rock: Tortoise, Labradford, Sabalon Glitz, Ui, Stars Of The Lid, Space Needle, Bowery Electric, Rome, Jessamine and many more.

> **"As the ersatz folk culture of fanzine editors and record store clerks, lo-fi was an aesthetic and cultural dead-end"**

Space Is The Place

Grunge literally means 'grime', 'muck', 'dirt'. It's appropriate that so many of those in revolt against Grunge's earthy passion have turned to science fiction and outer space in order to free up their imaginations. For instance, all the tracks on *A Stable Perspective*, the second album by the Chicago trio Labradford, are loosely inspired by the space race. "El Lago" is the district in Houston where Neil Armstrong lived while training for the Moon landing. The group's Mark Nelson talks nostalgically of the space race as "a monument to the human spirit, a desire to see something fantastical", before adding, poignantly, "I was one of those kids who thought we'd all be taking trips to the Moon by now."

Jud Ehrbar of Space Needle talks of how the group's *Voyager* album is influenced by 50s sci-fi movie soundtracks and early 70s space rock, then notes wistfully that "the innocence of those spacey groups has gone. We've lived through an era of disappointment with outer space, so in a way those yearnings have met up with the cynicism of Grunge."

ILLUSTRATION: BRETT RYDER





At the end of the *Ufonic* CD by Sabalon Glitz, another Chicago group, these frustrated longings for transcendence fuse with post-JFK paranoia and disillusionment, in the form of a long interview with a cantankerous crank who's obsessed with flying saucer abductions and the government 'conspiracy' to conceal from the American people the truth that contact with alien lifeforms has already been made

Musically, these groups align themselves with a space rock continuum that runs from Silver Apples, Hawkwind and the German Kosmische Musik groups to Spacemen 3 and Loop, groups who sublimated rock's blues roots into a bright blue beyond of guitar transcendentalism, thereby offering a rich source of ideas for anybody who wishes to escape the gravitational field of earthbound Grunge

Chris Holmes, core of Sabalon Glitz, namechecks the likes of Amon Duul II and Popol Vuh, and acclaims (incorrectly, but never mind) the latter's 1970 LP *Affenstunde* as "the first Ambient record it had all these synth gurgles and tablas and water sounds" Using Farfisas, MicroMoog, theremin, dulcimer and stylophone, plus effects-laden guitars, Holmes and his cohorts reach a similar celestial backwater of radiant amorphousness on *Ufonic*'s (literally) brilliant title track

Holmes has an even more Ambient side-project, Ashtar Command, whose name continues his obsession with cult cosmology (Ashtar being a sort of Intergalactic UN who channel instructions for humanity through receptive earthlings) Sabalon's hip cachet in America has swiftly gotten Holmes signed to Atlantic, but his latest project, *Songs About Our Sun* — a collection of "morning ragas, repetitive Popol Vuh-like riffs played on pretty acoustic instruments like sitar and tablas" — will probably come out as an Ashtar release on the Chicago Techno label Organico Similarly, the mantric abstraction of "Starry Eyes" and "Scientific Map", highpoints of Space Needle's otherwise song-oriented *Voyager*, looks set to blossom in Jud Ehrbar's lo-fi Ambient side-project Reservoir Ehrbar (who quit the drummer spot in Grunge combo Scarce just before they signed to a major, in a nicely symbolic act of defection from mainstream rock) describes Reservoir as "extremely repetitive, keyboard-based music, kind of Ambient, but more organic and dirty-sounding"

Although he's not opposed to sampladelic music and even cites De La Soul as an oblique influence, Ehrbar's preference for 'raw' analogue over 'sterile' digital is typical of the US post-rock fringe For some, it's a simple matter of economics Ehrbar says he'd love to get a digital set-up but the group could only afford Farfisas and other brands of outmoded synths, which are still dirt-cheap in the USA But it's also the case that musicians coming from a lo-fi, garageland background find analogue synths easier to integrate into their music, because they're hands-on instruments more compatible with the real-time group format.

"Analogue gear might have 100 filters and knobs to play with, as opposed to the mouse and VDU you get with digital," says Holme "When I play live, I can never totally duplicate the sounds on the Sabalon record, because every time you turn the machine on, it's a different machine There's a direct correlation between your physical act and the noise generated, and there's more instant gratificaton"

Six Finger Satellite (whose singer J Ryan appears onstage with a portable synth strapped round his neck like a guitar) go further and talk of analogue having a "warmth" that digital lacks So in a bizarre twist, what once, in the Numanoid 70s, epitomised frigid futurism and alienation has now become a signifier of 'grit' and 'humanity' But then the same thing happened to fuzz and wah-wah, which were outlandish guitar effects in the 60s

There's something of a boy-collector aspect to the US underground's current fetish for analogue Sabalon's 15-strong armoury of synths includes a proto-Mellotron called the Chamberlin that was once owned by The Moody Blues, and Holmes is currently negotiating the purchase of "the *Dr Who* Mellotron used by the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, complete with all their effects from 1962-1972"

But faddishness and kitsch appeal aside, analogue-mania reflects a genuine frustration with American rock's conservatism, a desire to extend the guitar/bass/drums format and reopen the frontier once explored by the Kosmische Musik groups who used these instruments the first time around At the same time, that experimental impulse is slightly inhibited by digital-phobia, analogue functions as a sort of preliminary stage before the full plunge into sampladelia

For American underground groups, digital is associated with HipHop (a no-go zone for whites) and with Nine Inch Nails style Industrial culture (for hipsters, a disgrace) If you want to stretch the boundaries but aren't quite ready to grapple with samplers, sequencers, MIDI and 'hard disk editing' (*à la* Young Gods, Techno Animal and Disco Inferno), what better half-measure than to invest in an ancient Moog, Korg or Buchla? Chris Holmes predicts that with the rising trendiness and therefore prices of analogue gear, US groups will soon turn to "early, low-resolution samplers like the Ensoniq Mirage that have gotten cheaper" In a year's time, many American groups will doubtless have followed in the footsteps of the UK's initially analogue-inclined Pram, who discreetly incorporated sampling into their sound on the recent *Sargasso Sea* album

For now, though, analogue rules In Chicago alone, there's the synthed-up motorik surge of Trans Am and Frontier, plus the intriguing Rome, whose dubbed-out miasma of wah-wah guitar and noxious Electronica is something like early Cabaret Voltaire meets late Loop On the Kranky label, Labradford use a battalion of Polymoogs, Roland vocoders and early Korgs to colour their meditational balladry, while Jessamine leaven their murky mantra-rock with Silver Apples-style oscillators

> **"The new US post-rock groups have turned to science fiction and outer space in order to free up their imaginations"**

Other neo-psychedelic groups — Bowery Electric, Bardo Pond — have not taken up the analogue option Still guitar-centric, they are nonetheless perhaps just one album away from the brink between drug-enervated dronology and riff-and-rhythm-free ambience that Spacemen 3 and Loop crossed with *Playing With Fire* and "Circle Grave", then explored further in such sequels as Spectrum and EAR, Spiritualized and Main This is a genuine post-rock because the guitar is no longer kinetic (a riff machine) but atmospheric (a texture and timbre generator) Fed through effects pedals and 'signal processing' devices, the guitar effectively becomes a kind of analogue synthesizer Syd Barrett, with his use of slide to unleash a fractal chaos, and Fripp/Eno and Cluster, with their tape-delay generated aural Op Art, got to this re- or un-invention of the guitar first. But there's still reams of work to be done

Some American groups — Labradford, Stars Of The Lid, even Sub Pop's Ambient-Grunge group Earth — have already reached Main-land, creating lustrous, meditational dronescapes deceptively similar to Robert Hampson's efforts I say 'deceptively', because none of these groups have yet embraced the studio-as-instrument methodology that underpins Main or Thomas Koner In terms of approach,

they have more in common with the real-time din-scapes generated by UK groups Skullflower and Flying Saucer Attack, or New Zealand's Dead C. For instance, 90 per cent of a Labradford song is composed before they enter the studio, according to Mark Nelson. "At the heart of each track lies a real-time performance, recorded live."

Groove Collectives

From Krautrock to rave, the psychedelic rollercoaster eventually comes to rest in the blessed serenity and aural entropy of Ambient. (Look at the New Age dotage of Ash Ra, Neu!'s Michael Rother, Cluster, *et al*, or the mellow, soul-caressing directions taken up by raved-out acolytes of Techno and Jungle.) Drug burn-out aside, Ambient is a logical destination for American space-rockers too. But it's also a potential cul de sac. When you've decentred songs into soundscapes — removing vocals and verse-chorus-verse structures, dropping the backbeat and dissolving the riff, eradicating every last vestige of rock dynamics — what's left? Where do you go from there?

Those American groups reluctant to abandon groove and the physicality of rock altogether — Cul De Sac, Run On, Ui — look to another strand of early 70s experimentalism, and locate models of post-rock kineticism in the flesh-and-blood rhythm-engines that powered Can and Neu!, early 70s Miles Davis, Tim Buckley, sometimes even Canterbury scene artists like Soft Machine and Robert Wyatt. Motorik, the metronomic proto-disco pulsebeat of Neu! and Kraftwerk, is particularly influential with the likes of Trans-Am, Six Finger Satellite, Cul De Sac, as it offers a way for rock to keep moving without lapsing back into R&B. (This also explains why self-appointed curators of the Neu! legacy, Stereolab, are so highly regarded in America.)

Superficially similar to the Krautrock-aligned groups, but fundamentally at odds with their hypno-groove aesthetic, is the style that Americans call 'math-rock'. Applied to groups like Don Caballero, Polvo, Chavez and the now deceased Rodan, the term refers to an avant-impulse that is expressed entirely through rock's anti-dance rhythms and through the traditional line-up of guitars/bass/drums. Riffs are chopped up and tesselated, dynamics, tempos and time signatures are convoluted, strange and complex chords are clustered. The result is a bit like King Crimson with the spectre of Steve Albini looming over them and glowering 'Keep it punk!'

What the Can/Neu-heads and the math-rockers do share is a dogged adherence to the traditional American privileging of live performance over sweatless studio-trickery. Only one group seems to be able to slip fluently between 'organic' Improv-rock and dub-wise aural anamorphosis. On their 1994 self-titled debut, Tortoise bridged the gap between Slint (godfathers of the new rock geometry) and Seefeel. On the recent mini-LP *Rhythms, Resolutions & Clusters*, they plunged deep into the dub-descended art of remixology, versioning tracks that appeared on the group's first album. Their second album proper, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, due out in January next year, mixes the succulent flow-motion of live jamming with the dizzy disorientation of studio sorcery. On the astounding first track, "DJed", the glistening gamelan web of chiming vibes and pizzicato bass is suddenly afflicted with what sounds like tape drop-out, and it's as though the top layer of the track is scraped away like paint, revealing another track from a different sonic universe altogether: an Aphex Twin/Mouse On Mars Techno-dub reverbscape of blips, crackles and glitches. Elsewhere, the album veers from the triple bass guitar interplay of "A Survey" to the lugubrious spy movie TripHop of "Along The Banks Of Rivers".

Tortoise cite figures as diverse as King Tubby, Scientist, Lee Perry, Brian Wilson, Eno and rap producers like Hank Shocklee as the inspirations behind their un-American interest in the vertical organisation of sound (spatial and layered, as opposed to horizontal-through-time). The Jamaican notion of 'version' seems to have a particularly strong grip on their imagination, not just with the *Rhythms, Resolutions* project, but with "Gonri", their contribution to Virgin's *Macro Dub Infection* compilation. "Gonri" is a drastic remix of "Gamara" (recently released as one side of a 12 inch single on Stereolab's Duophonic label), which in turn was a dramatically expanded revamp of "His Second Story Island" from the debut LP.

The real question is: why are Tortoise, with their dub-wisdom and studio-smarts, so unique and so isolated in the American context? Why were they the only white Americans to appear on *Macro Dub Infection*? Post-rock is a Transatlantic phenomenon, but there are telling differences between the British and American strands, and most of them revolve around British bohemia's susceptibility to the influence of black music, whether American, Caribbean or homegrown. US post-rock can almost be defined by the absence of dub as a living legacy, and by the avoidance of HipHop.

Dub's immeasurably greater impact on British leftfield rock goes back to the late 70s, to the kinship punks felt with Rastafarian reggae's spiritual militancy, its millennial imagery of exile and dread. In particular, the trajectory Johnny Rotten took from *Never Mind The Bollocks* (with its infamous metallic production) to PiL's *Metal Box* (with its dub-*noir* stealth and space) is vastly significant. *Metal Box* turned a significant segment of Lydon's following onto dub, Can, etc. You can trace the reverberations of Jah Wobble's bass through Killing Joke and On-U Sound to The Orb, Scorn and Techno Animal.

In Britain, staying unaware and uninfected by HipHop and its homegrown offshoots like TripHop and drum 'n' bass can only be achieved by a strenuous feat of cultural inbreeding. It's not exaggerating to say that HipHop's sampladelia made UK post-rock possible, from the impact of early ultra-raw Def Jam releases on My Bloody Valentine to the inspirational effect of the Bomb Squad/Public Enemy production on the likes of Techno Animal. The resistance of US rock groups to such influence is puzzling — given the omnipresence of rap, from MTV, to that jeep with the booming system coming down your block — and can only be attributed to the sensitive racial politics that surround rap in America. While UK groups could respond to HipHop as yet another exotic imported 'street sound', white American bohemians feel that it is black cultural property, to be given props, but not to be trespassed upon.

As for Techno influencing American post-rock, forget it. Not only did rave never come close to overwhelming America like it did Britain, but there's a cluster of bigotries that form an impenetrable barrier: the premium on live performance, the lingering legacy of 'disco sucks', the hatred of machine rhythms. The upshot of all this is that UK post-rock outfits, influenced by various admixtures of dub, HipHop and Techno, tend to be studio-centric sound laboratories for whom live performance is an irrelevance, whereas American post-rockers remain deeply committed to the group format and playing live.

New York, New York

There was a time and a place, when/where the British and Americans were in sync and a group like Tortoise would not have seemed like such a miraculous aberration. New York in the early 80s. Just ask Sasha Frere-Jones, whose avant-funk outfit Ui harks back to an era when musical miscegenation was the norm on both sides of the Atlantic, from The Gang Of Four to James Chance, A Certain Ratio to ESG, The Pop Group to Ze. Frere-Jones jokingly describes Ui as "a revival group", in so far as they're an attempt to resurrect the 'hybrid' New York of his youth.



Labradford



Jon Spencer Blues Explosion

"Back in 1980, aged 13, I'd listen to [illegible] radio where they'd play white funk like Pigbag, The Higsons, Liquid Liquid, Bonk. At rock shows, the DJs always used to play dance music and dub [illegible] Grandmaster Flash would support The Clash. I'm wary of romanticising [illegible] hate nostalgia, but I've thought about it enough that I don't think I'm disto[illegible] What happened to New York feels like a real loss," he says, referring to [illegible] facto segregation that keeps HipHop and underground rock and dance [illegible] ly insulated from each other

What went wrong? Why a[illegible] Beastie Boys (whose Mike D went to the same Brooklyn school as Frere-[illegible] Luscious Jackson just about the only legacy of this early 80s New York [illegible] d Brains, Au Pairs, Treacherous Three, I Roy and Minor Threat were all [illegible] part of the same post-punk continuum? Frere-Jones lays the blam[illegible] rise of two separate 'hardcores': the Sonic Youth-centered "white no[illegible] casts", as Lester Bangs prophetically put it back in the days of No Wave, [illegible] ore rap

In the first ca[illegible] s the gradual codification of Bangs's 'avant-garage' creed into an ortho[illegible] fluential acolytes like Byron Coley of *Forced Exposure* and Gerard Cosl[illegible] ict/Homestead/Matador, and the musical praxis of Bangsian theory as [illegible] Sonic Youth, Big Black, Pussy Galore, *et al*. "That Bangs idea of the por[illegible] ee jazz meets up with white noise teen primitivism, it meant somet[illegible] 9, maybe even in 1979, but not anymore," argues Frere-Jones. "It's [illegible] art people pretending to be stupid, valorising adolescence, and that's a [illegible] ple of a white search for authenticity, the ultimate 'rawness'. But that's a[illegible] cerebral idea, not very intuitive or musical."

[illegible], The Jesus & Mary Chain had a similar pivotal role as Sonic Youth, their [illegible] edback and rudimentary Spector-beat signalling the end of the New Pop [illegible] ations with funk and disco, and a return to rock classicism (Velvets, Stooges, [illegible] uckily, the impact of HipHop and rave in Britain injected some funk back into [illegible] anti-rhythmic dead-end, even the Mary Chain's non-drummer Bobby Gillespie [illegible] fly got on the good foot, circa Primal Scream's "Higher Than The Sun". According [illegible] Frere-Jones, in America, the rise of the hardcore ethos in rap meant that "it became more important for HipHop fans to fend whites off. That's when you started to get the obsession with keeping it 'real' and 'hardcore'." And with a handful of exceptions — Beck, Consolidated, MC 900Ft Jesus — white American bohemians stayed well away. Sonic Youth's quarter-assed flirtation with HipHop took the form of their comedic alter-ego Ciccone Youth, and though they squeezed out some decent dubby Neu!-scapes amid the crap rap and Robert Palmer and Madonna covers, they never let any studio-savvy they might have gleaned seep back into their 'proper' Sonic Youth output.

B[illegible] York's hippest group was Pussy Galore, apotheosis of the [illegible] do and creators of possibly the most punked-out and [illegible] less racket ever — not so much white as *albino* noise. It's surely no coincidence that Pussy Galore lynchpins Neil Hagerty and Jon Spencer both soon tired of hurtling headlong down this dead end of attitude OD and distortion overload. In their new combos Royal Trux and Blues Explosion, they gradually rediscovered 'groove' via the raunch of early 70s Rolling Stones and the funk of Mr James Brown. Others groups — Come, Mule, Railroad Jerk, Red Red Meat — also turned to the past in order to relearn the lost fundamentals of 'feel' and 'swing' from black R&B and hillbilly boogie (or more often from the late 60s/early 70s white appropriations thereof).

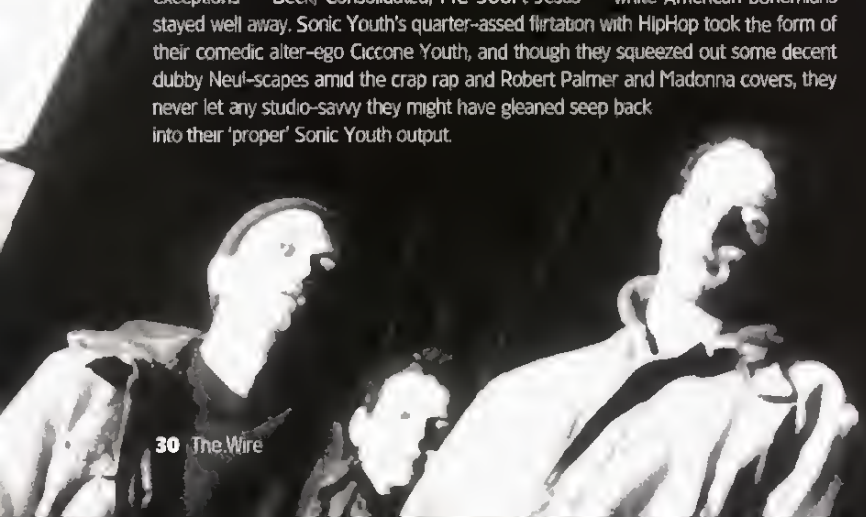
"They all had to go through The Stones to get to a decent backbeat," says Frere-Jones. "I think it was a subconscious way to finally respond to HipHop, because you can't keep making noise. The Blues Explosion is Spencer's way of dealing with the fact that kids today, who've grown up exposed to HipHop, are not going to get into something without decent rhythms."

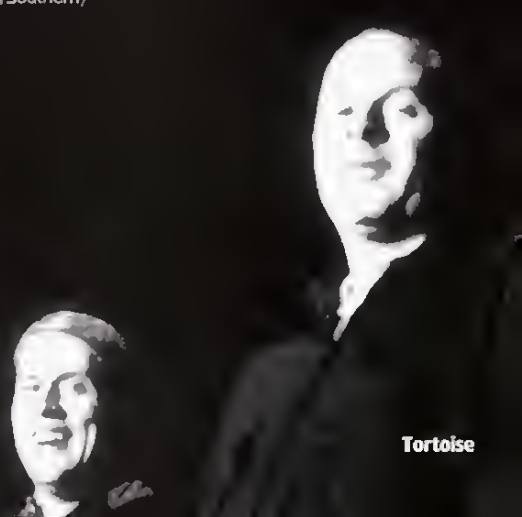
While the Blues Explosion's own recordings are strictly live 'n' smokin', Spencer made a more explicit nod to HipHop with this year's "Experimental Remixes" EP, wherein the Blues Explosion's No Wave boogie-funk got worked over by UNKLE (Mo' Wax's James Lavelle), Wu Tang Clan's Genius, Beck and Mike D.

Ui are on a similar quest to shake booty, but instead of going back to raunch 'n' roll, they play a hypertense blues-tinged avant-funk pitched somewhere between Miles Davis's *On The Corner* and Can's *Ege Bamyasi*. Although Frere-Jones is deeply enamoured of studio-based dance music from Wagon Christ to the darkest drum 'n' bass, he says his goal is to achieve hybridity within the real-time combustion engine of a live group, rather than through the cut 'n' mix of sampladelia. But as well as their excellent debut proper *Sidelong*, Ui have also produced a remix LP, featuring astonishing revamps by Tortoise's producer/drummer John McEntire, downtown experimentalist David Linton of Circuit Bible, and a pair of unknown Canadian TripHoppers. More than anything, these three remix albums by Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Tortoise and Ui indicate a sea-change for the LIS underground scene, and the birth-pangs of an American post-rock. At last, some Americans are attempting to catch up with us, and with the future. □

Some records

Bowery Electric — Bowery Electric (Kranky)
Cul De Sac — I Don't Want To Go To Bed (Flying Nun)
Earth — Phase 3. Thrones And Dominions (Sub Pop)
Jessamine — Jessamine (Kranky)
Labradford — Prazision, A Stable Perspective (both Kranky)
Run On — On/Off (Matador EP)
Sabalon Glitz — Ufonic (Trixie)
Six Finger Satellite — Machine Cuisine, Severe Exposure (both Sub Pop)
Space Needle — Voyager (Space Needle)
Jon Spencer Blues Explosion — Experimental Remixes (Matador)
Stars Of The Lid — Music For Nitrous Oxide (Sedimental)
Tortoise — Tortoise (City Slang), Rhythms, Resolutions & Clusters (City Slang), "Gamara"/"Cliff Dweller Society" (Duophonic 12")
Ui — Sidelong (Luna Moth/Southern)





Tortoise

Warp, Ronco, Ministry Of Sound, Decca, R & S, K.Tel, Nation, Pickwick, Mo Wax, BBC Records, Risin' High

Languague

(spot the odd one out)



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Karlheinz surveys the Royal Albert Hall, mid-70s

Earlier this year, Radio 3 sent a package of tapes to **Karlheinz Stockhausen**. The tapes contained music by Aphex Twin, Plastikman, Scanner and Daniel Pemberton. Then in August, the station's reporter Dick Witts travelled to Salzburg to meet Stockhausen and ask him for his opinion on the music of these four 'Technocrats'. But first, they talked about the German composer's own youthful experiments in electronic synthesis. . .

Advice to clever children...

DW When you started as a composer, how different were the conditions from today?

KS I studied music as a pianist, and learning all the traditional techniques of composing, in an institution called Stadtliche Hofschule fur Musik. We had about ten disciplines to study: choir, orchestra, conducting, piano was my main instrument, then musicology, harmony and counterpoint. I wrote several works in traditional styles, but also two works, so-called 'free compositions', one for orchestra and alto voice, a work which is still available on CD called the *Drei Lieder*. I started composing [at the age of] 20, 1948, the first time I considered [my] music [to be] of some general importance, and they are available, like the Violin Sonatina.

Why did you consider those works a beginning?

Because everything that could be studied with the professors at the conservatory, the other students also were able to write. So there was nothing special to write a fugue or to write a piece in the style of Hindemith. But it was special to write something different from all the composers I wrote, for example, a small theatre piece, *Burleska*, together with two colleagues. We divided the piece into three parts. My part did not sound as the newspapers said [of the other two parts] like Orff, or like Hindemith, but different. So I was very proud that they said my section did not sound 'like' something.

I composed *Kreuzspiel*, or *Crossplay* [1951], and I knew when I wrote it that it would sound like nothing else in the world. People were quite upset when they heard it for the first time at the national summer courses for contemporary music in Darmstadt, where I conducted the piece, it was violently interrupted by the public. And since then I have composed works from one to the next, always waiting until I've found something that I had never imagined before or that sounded like anything existing.

> **"I wish these musicians would go faster in developing their ideas, because I don't appreciate this permanent repetitive language. It is like someone who is stuttering all the time, and can't get words out of his mouth."**

Can you hear a line, a unity, in everything you've written, from Kreuzspiel *to* Licht*?*

Many lines, depends on which level. For example, space exploration in music is one line, then sound- and word-relationship is another line, from the beginning until today, then the discovery of polyphony in many-layered composition is another line, and that is what is essential, the discovery of sounds which are derived from formulas for particular compositions. That goes from the very first electronic studies until my very last works which I have just finished, which I call electronic music with sound-scenes for *Friday From Light*, which is two hours 25 minutes of music which I work on in the electronic music studio in Cologne. This is another line. Then the development from serial technique to formula technique is again another line. So it depends just where you touch my musical mind, and I will show you how many, many lines are running in parallel and crossing each other constantly in different compositions.

Going back to Kreuzspiel *— that was around the time you first started using technology.*

Yes. 1952 I started working in the studio for *musique concrete*, of the French radio. Because I was very intrigued by the possibility to compose one's own sound. I was allowed to work in the studio of Pierre Schaeffer. I made artificial sounds, synthetic sounds, and I composed my first etude, *Etude Concrete*. At the same time, I was extremely curious, and went to the Musee de L'Homme in Paris with a tape recorder and microphones, and I recorded all the different instruments of the ethnological department. Indonesian instruments, Japanese instruments, Chinese instruments, less European instruments because I knew them better, but even piano sounds. Then I analysed these sounds one by one, and wrote down the frequencies which I found and the dynamic level of the partials of the spectra, in order to know what the sound is made of, what a sound *is*, as a matter of fact, what is the difference between a lithophone sound or, let's say, a Thai gong sound of a certain pitch. And very slowly I discovered the nature of sounds. The idea to analyse sounds gave me the idea to synthesize sounds. So then I was looking for synthesizers or the first electronic generators, and I superimposed vibrations in

PHOTO PETER JOHNS (COURTESY *THE GUARDIAN*)

order to compose spectra timbres I do this now, still, after 43 years

Have things got easier for you?

No Really not Really not The last three weeks I just spent every day in the studio, eight hours, working with a new digital technique with a Capricorn mixing console, the newest one, from Siemens, or the English Nieve Nicam, from Cambridge, and two 24 channel Sony tape recorders, one being the leader and one running in slave, in order to make very special movements in space And I must tell you that out of eight hours per day I waited seven hours without any result, because the technicians, sound engineers, didn't know how to deal with these instruments, and had never encountered problems which I had imposed So it is becoming more difficult for me

I wonder to what extent your fascination with technology helps you as a composer, and to what extent your frustration with it helps you?

[Tragic] I don't know I go on No matter how difficult it is Very often I am quite desperate

You say your music speaks of the essential unity of the universe, I wonder how you come to this realisation, and how it speaks through the music?

Well, I didn't come to it That is the oldest tradition of all music styles, music cultures on this planet The beginning of every art music development, in China or in India or in European monasteries was always to relate the art of shaping composing sounds with the art [by which] the stars are shaped and composed Astronomy, mathematics and music were the highest disciplines throughout the centuries since the beginning of European art music in the monasteries, let's say in the tenth century until the 14th, 15th century I have studied all music of Europe as a student — I had to — and I at a very early age became aware, also naturally, [that] certain music, like the *Art Of The Fugue* of Johann Sebastian Bach or the *Musikolische Opfer*, [has] always known about this relationship between the laws of the universe, astronomical laws, and the laws of the music of this Earth For example, I admire very much the music of Anton Von Webern, who is practically not known by the large public today But he studied Senfl, composer of the late Renaissance, German composer who also knew the isorhythmic Motette, the technique of isorhythms, and Webern was very, very aware, as a collector of very strange plants, he always went on the mountains, in the Alps, to collect the most beautiful and loneliest plants in the world, and dried them And his music is like that he knew that the same laws which ruled the inner life of atoms and galaxies applied to the music To the art music

Can we talk about the music we sent you? It was very good of you to listen to it. I wonder if you could give some advice to these musicians

I wish those musicians would not allow themselves any repetitions, and would go faster in developing their ideas or their findings, because I don't appreciate at all this permanent repetitive language It is like someone who is stuttering all the time, and can't get words out of his mouth I think musicians should have very concise figures and not rely on this fashionable psychology I don't like psychology whatsoever using music like a drug is stupid One shouldn't do that music is the product of the highest human intelligence, and of the best senses, the listening senses, and of imagination and intuition And as soon as it becomes just a means for ambiance, as we say, environment, or for being used for certain purposes, then music becomes a whore, and one should not allow that really, one should not serve any existing demands or in particular not commercial values That would be terrible that is selling out the music

I heard the piece Aphex Twin of Richard James carefully I think it would be very helpful if he listens to my work *Song Of The Youth*, which is electronic music, and a young boy's voice singing with himself Because he would then immediately stop with all these post-African repetitions, and he would look for changing tempi and changing rhythms, and he would not allow to repeat any rhythm if it were varied to some extent and if it did not have a direction in its sequence of variations

And the other composer — musician, I don't know if they call themselves composers.

They're sometimes called 'sound artists'

No, 'Technocrats', you called them He's called Plastikman, and in public, Richie Hawtin It starts with about 30 or 40 — I don't know, I haven't counted them — fifths in parallel, always the same perfect fifths, you see, changing from one to the next, and then come in hundreds of repetitions of one small section of an African rhythm duh-duh-dum, etc, and I think it would be helpful if he would listen to *Cycle* for percussion, which is only a 15 minute long piece of mine for a percussionist, but there he will have a hell to understand the rhythms, and I think he will get a taste for very interesting non-metric and non-periodic rhythms I know that he wants to have a special effect in dancing bars, or wherever it is, on the public who like to dream away with such repetitions, but he should be very careful, because this public will sell him out immediately for something else, if a new kind of musical drug is on the market So he should be very careful and separate as soon as possible from the belief in this kind of public

The other is Robin Rimbaud, Scanner, I've heard, with radio noises He is very experimental, because he is searching in a realm of sound which is not usually used for music But I think he should transform more what he finds He leaves it too much in a raw state He has a good sense for atmosphere, but he is too repetitive again So let him listen to my work *Hymnen* There are found objects — a lot like he finds with his scanner, you see But I think he should learn the art of transformation, so that what you find sounds completely new, as I sometimes say, like an apple on the moon

Then there's another one Daniel Pemberton His work which I heard has noise loops he likes loops, a loop effect, like in *musique concrète*, where I worked in 1952, and Pierre Henry and Schaeffer himself, they found some sounds, like say the sounds of a casserole, they made a loop, and then they transposed this loop So I think he should give up this loop it is too old fashioned Really He likes train rhythms, and I think when he comes to a soft spot, a quiet spot, his harmony sounds to my ears like ice cream harmony It is so kitschy, he should stay away from these ninths and sevenths and tenths in parallel so, look for a harmony which sounds new and sounds like Pemberton and not like anything else He should listen to *Kontakte*, which has among my works the largest scale of harmonic, unusual and very demanding harmonic relationships I like to tell the musicians that they should learn from works which have already gone through a lot of temptations and have refused to give in to these stylistic or to these fashionable temptations □

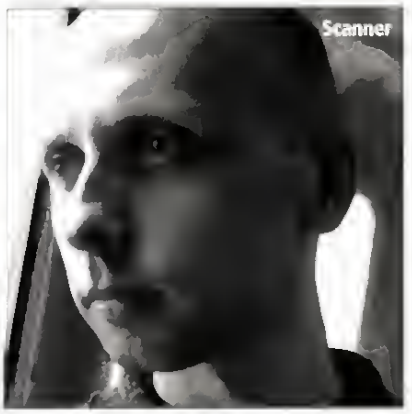
Portions of this interview were broadcast on Radio 3 in October as part of the Technocrats *mini-series, which examined Stockhausen's musical legacy This partially edited transcript is printed here courtesy of Radio 3 and Soundbite Productions. The music which Stockhausen was commenting on included "Ventolin" and "Alberto Balsam" by Aphex Twin, Plastikman's* Sheet One *album, "Micrographia", "Dimension" and "Discreet" by Scanner, and "Phoenix", "Phosphine", "Novelty Track" and "Voices" by Daniel Pemberton*



Stockhausen in the Studio für Elektronische Musik, Cologne

PHOTO HARALD FRONZECK/STOCKHAUSEN VERLAG

Advice from clever children...



Following Stockhausen's advice to our four Technocrats, we decided to play them excerpts from the compositions which the German composer suggested they listen to and learn from. Here's what they had to say.

Aphex Twin on *Song Of The Youth*

Mental! I've heard that track before, I like it. I didn't agree with him. I thought he should listen to a couple of tracks of mine. "Didgeridoo", then he'd stop making abstract, random patterns you can't dance to. Do you reckon he can dance? You could dance to *Song Of The Youth*, but it hasn't got a groove in it, there's no bassline. I know it was probably made in the 50s, but I've got plenty of wicked percussion records made in the 50s that are awesome to dance to. And they've got basslines. I could remix it. I don't know about making it better, I wouldn't want to make it into a dance version, but I could probably make it a bit more anally technical. But I'm sure he could these days, because tape is really slow. I used to do things like that with tape, but it does take forever, and I'd never do anything like that again with tape. Once you've got your computer sorted out, it pisses all over stuff like that, you can do stuff so fast. It has a different sound, but a bit more anal.



I haven't heard anything new by him, the last thing was a vocal record, *Stimmung*, and I didn't really like that. Would I take his comments to heart? The ideal thing would be to meet him in a room and have a wicked discussion. For all I know, he could be taking the piss. It's a bit hard to have a discussion with someone via other people.

I don't think I care about what he thinks. It is interesting, but it's disappointing, because you'd imagine he'd say that anyway. It wasn't anything surprising. I don't know anything about the guy, but I expected him to have that sort of attitude. Loops are good to dance to.

He should hang out with me and my mates, that would be a laugh. I'd be quite into having him round.

Scanner on *Hymnen*

It's interesting that I've not heard this before, and maybe Thomas Koner hasn't and so on, but you can relate it to our work. I don't know whether it's conscious or not. I was two years old when this was written! Stockhausen says he doesn't like repetition: what I like about repetition is it can draw the listener and lull you into a false sense of security, but when it gets too abstract — this is cut-ups — I find it very difficult to digest over a long period of time. He's a lapsed Catholic, and there's the sense that it's meant to be a religious experience passing through these records, like a purging of the system. Whether you like it or not, you're affected in one way or another. I'd like to hear this live.

I prefer the gentler passages. I do find myself irritated by that barrage of sound against sound over a long period of time: an alternative kind of repetition. That's why I like Jim O'Rourke's work, because it works over long periods.

I wonder about him putting himself into the recording: is it a vanity thing, or part of the process? With the scanner, it's like live editing, which is like this as well. When you scan, if you don't like something you flick between frequencies, when you DJ you cut between records, and it is an art form as a form of live editing.

Reminds me of the Holger Czukay LP *Der Osten Ist Rot*, cutting between national anthems, like tuning through a radio. I don't know whether this is actually happening or not. This is very good actually — better than I expected. At the end there's a recording of him breathing. It's quite uncomfortable — like being inside his head.

I take some of what he said about my music to heart. Part of what I'm interested in is transforming material. Lots of the sounds I use are off the scanner or the shortwave radio. Lots of people wouldn't realise that sometimes a bass sound isn't a keyboard bass sound: it's a little blip on the phone. So I do try and transform the material as much as possible. I disagree about repetition. I think, as John Cage said, repetition is a form of change, and it's a concept you either agree or disagree with. I like repetition, I like Richie Hawtin's work for that very aspect. In a way it is like a religious experience: if his work is about spirituality, then this is a kind of alternative, non-religious spirituality, where you're drawn in by this block of rhythm, it's an incredible feeling, the way it moves you physically, and moves you on a dancefloor as well.

Things like this are designed to be listened to over long periods of time, and sometimes I think it could do with some editing. Most contemporary sound artists are working within a four to ten minute time scale, basically. And to be honest, for most people that's enough.

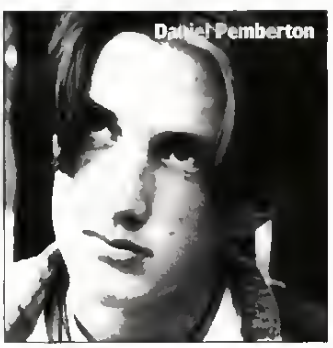
Daniel Pemberton on *Kontakte*

At first I expected someone hitting a piano randomly, but there were happenings in there, with stereo panning and effects. I was very impressed considering the time it was done: the 1960s. He was going on about how everyone's stuff was repetitive, but his stuff is the complete opposite: so unrepetitive that it never really got anywhere. Not necessarily a bad thing, but it didn't have any development in it: sounded like an Old School FSOL. When he recommends *Kontakte* for its "very demanding harmonic relationships", it sounds a bit suspect to me: the whole piece seems to be dealing far more with timbre than with harmonic relationship. It's obviously based around sound, and any harmonics on there, to the non-musical ear, sound like a piano hit randomly. It would be very good to put some HipHop breaks under, actually.

What he said about me was quite funny: he accuses me of old hat. I was born in 1977, 25 years before [*Kontakte*], a longer time than I've lived. I'm still learning musical history. If my whole career goes down the pan, at least I've got a future with Mr Whippy! And for him to call eigths, ninths and tenths 'kitschy'! The scales I commonly use aren't too adventurous, but that's because they're the ones that sound nice. The stuff I've done which is unlistenable, I haven't released because no one would enjoy it.

It's good to have other people's views. I ignore them in the sense that I know what I want to do: his criticisms won't make me throw everything away and start working with bizarre new scales and fantastic new instruments. I know what he means about loops though, that's because I haven't got much equipment.

Get a chewn, mate! I think he should develop his music a bit more. Try and repeat some of the ideas, work on them, build them up, you can still change them. He should listen to a track off my forthcoming album, *Homemade*. Stockhausen should experiment more with standard melodies, try and subvert them, he should stop being so afraid of the normal by being so afraid of the normal he's being normal himself by being the complete opposite. He should try to blend the two together: that would be new and interesting. To me, anyway. □



Interviews by Rob Young. Richie Hawtin was not available for his comments on Zyklus.



From 80s sex dwarf to 90s glam savage, **Marc Almond**'s various guises have subverted conventional notions of pop stardom and identity. Meanwhile, on-going collaborations with the likes of Coil and Psychic TV have maintained his connections with music's esoteric fringes. Interview by Biba Kopf

sweet deceiver

On the face of it Marc Almond is a mess. His knotty black quiff flops forward to tickle the bridge of his ringed nose, but it's more likely nerves that trigger the irregular peals of laughter which spill out of his awkward triangle of a mouth. Though the glam savage doesn't extend to full war make-up for daytime encounters, on the afternoon I meet him, he is encased in a second, shiny, black leather skin, which scarcely conceals the tattooed body art proliferating across the one he was born in.

We meet early in October at London's Abbey Road studios, where Marc is finishing recording the music for *Fantastic Star*, his first studio album in five years. Though the record is something of a return to the familiar territory of warped electronic pop, he's somehow rendered it strange by merging it with roaring glam rock biker guitars and globs of cheesy New York Doll idolatry. If on paper that sounds like a mess, or exactly like the grab-bag of discarded gutter imagery and enthusiasms you'd expect of Almond, well, on the surface, it is. Threadbare glamour is frequently the starting point of his songs, but it's the way he scrutinises the very real emotional bruises underneath that redeems his use of the kind of shop-soiled dreams that sustain his narratives.

Yet if Marc Almond's a bit of a mess whichever way you look at him, it's as well to remember that he is also a survivor. He is the only member of that group of playful pop subversives which emerged in the early 80s to have come through to the 90s with any kind of credibility left. The others, the would-be sweet deceivers, the Scritti's, ABCs, Human Leagues, Heaven 17s and the rest, with their clever boardroom talk about backdoor pop entryism and all the fine subversive tricks they were going to pull once on the inside, were so quickly absorbed into the mainstream they forgot what it was that distinguished them in the first place, and just as soon returned to obscurity. Even at his most chart-conscious Almond has never been anything less than himself. Over the years, the personas have undergone chameleon-like change, of course, but whether that self be the poison sex dwarf of early Soft Cell, the 80s nabob of sob mourning the lost innocence of rent boys and fallen girls while celebrating their powers of survival, or, latterly, the returning glam savage, Almond has never shirked from giving the song his joyously scabrous, battered and bleeding all.

In tandem with his mainstream activities, Almond has pursued his more arcane interests with equal vigour. He contributed a fine vocal to "Guiltless" on Psychic TV's first album *Force The Hand Of Chance*, he's guested on albums by Coil that hum with occult science, collaborated with Jim Thirlwell, aka Foetus, on, among other projects, the notorious "Flesh Volcano" EP, and appeared with him, Lydia Lunch and Nick Cave in the legendary, if short-lived Hallowe'en cabaret act The Immaculate Consumptives. Almond's tandem approach to pop and the underground for once justifies his outlaw status — that is, he's never so far removed from people's lives that he can't register the significant impact on them of his darker excursions.

Bridging his work at the margins and in the mainstream is his choice of covers, through which he more objectively focuses his darkside concerns. He has transformed a love of French culture and chansons into three tremendous (and sadly overlooked)

PHOTO: KATIE TUETON

releases the Bataille mini-LP tribute *Violent Silence*, *Jacques*, an album of Jacques Brel compositions, and the French song album, *Absinthe*. For someone who seems such a mess, Marc Almond's work rate is astonishing.

The 80s was a shallow, cynical, glitzy and gormless decade for pop music. The underground and the mainstream — terms which were once mutually exclusive but which increasingly have no meaning — were so far apart at the time that they had nothing useful to say to each other. Almond was a rarity among major label artists in that he kept a dialogue going between the charts and darkside colleagues such as Coil, Foetus, Cave and the like. But it was hard work, and despite the fact he had Stevo and his Some Bizzare management group running tackle for him, the major labels he signed to did their best to knock the dirt out of him. A mess of nerves and ticks he might be, but Almond thrives on the conflict.

"I probably will run out of major labels," he laughs. "I mean, every label in the end has got disillusioned with me, because they can't make me be what they want me to be. When I finally run out of labels, I'll end up on an independent. But I feel that would be like slipping into a comfortable pair of slippers as opposed to stomping around town in a pair of wicked stilettos. If I was able to, from tomorrow, do what I want for the rest of my life, I'm sure I'd end up turning out mediocre records from now until whenever with the same few people buying them.

"I do like trying to change things," he asserts, "and trying to confound people's expectations of things."

In the space of that low, dirty fighting decade, Marc managed to get through three label deals before beginning the 90s signed to WEA. But the conflicts had taken their toll. By 1990, he was demoralised and exhausted, all his long-running musical relationships broken. And he was also addicted to tranquillisers. All the songs he demoed for his new label were rejected, prompting the question why they signed him in the first place.

> **"Every label in the end has got disillusioned with me, because they can't make me be what they want me to be"**

"It's the experience I've always had with record companies," he sighs. "It's the double-edged sword of working with major record labels — if you're a hands-on creative artist. They sign an idea of you. I think they see you as a voice, they know you have very much the potential of getting hit records, but they don't quite like the way you're doing it. Every time, someone high up there has an idea of the way they want you to be. You know, it's like you should cross over much more, you should tone yourself down much more, you should really play down the dark side of your music and make it much more palatable for mass consumption. They want to put their creative input into it as well, so they can get up in meetings and say, 'We've made Marc Almond a bigger success', and they can all pat each other on the back and take responsibility for it. [But] it's not, 'Marc Almond the success', it's, 'Marc Almond the success we made him'. You know, Marc was off the rails until we put him back on again, he's had the biggest hits he's ever had in his career.'"

His demos rejected and all the fight gone out of him, Almond surrendered. "I said, all right, I give in. You win. Give me the studio, give me the song and I'll sing it."

He probably hadn't reckoned on WEA matching him up with producer Trevor Horn. If any one figure represents all that was shallow, cynical, stupid and overblown about the 80s, it is Horn. Indicative of his age, this tin-eared blockhead of a Spector wannabe only ever had one successful idea: to inflate the pint-size songs of his puny clients to their imagined dick size, which was all well and good for preening their egos, but not one piece of Horn-pop — excepting Propaganda's "Dr Mabuse" — held up for long indeed, they'd start wilting as soon as they were presented with the studio costs.

If Almond was in a better fighting shape, the studio pairing might have presented an intriguing battle of two opposed tendencies. Almond's corner representing pop's capacity for converting the raw side of love into bruised or tender ballads, and Horn in his corner checking the fire power of his latest gizmos. But for once, Marc wasn't up to it: he was in no condition to project some heart into the music Horn came up with for the *Tenement Symphony* album. He even allowed himself to front the pumped-up, grandiloquent arrangement of Brel's "Jacky", which scored him a hit, but little real satisfaction.

"I felt I was being made a guest on my record," he sighs once more, "or, in fact, I even felt that I was being tolerated on my own record. You kind of got the feeling that if you could phone or fax in your performance, he'd rather you'd do that so you didn't have to come into the studio at all. I don't think he likes dealing with artists. I think he finds artists a bit of a pain in the neck, really, especially if you've got your own ideas. A producer for me is someone there to help achieve some of the sounds I want to get, help curb some of my excesses, and put me in the right direction. But working with Trevor, I was finding I'd come in and he has something completely different from what you heard the previous day, and so on. I found myself despairing a bit, because I found myself in the situation where I wasn't being involved with my own record. So therefore for me, even though the singles were successful and everything, they were these full Spectoresque hunks of pop sound or whatever, making a whole album like that for me didn't add up creatively, I wasn't satisfied, and you know I didn't feel like I'd made an album."

Of course he'd made bad records before, but the mistakes then were very much his own. And often as not, his failures arose from the fact that he was floundering after the ultimate form of expression for a particularly distressed or pained state and falling way short of his target. Even then, there's usually something which the listener can salvage from, for instance, the flamenco thrashes of great, lurid purple messes like *Untitled* and *Torment And Toreros*, both recorded under the name Marc And The Mambas. Indeed his greatest albums are often his messiest, the result of Almond losing a grip on himself and struggling to find his way back.

The only way out of *Tenement Symphony* was to get out of the deal with WEA. The pain of the association endured long enough to give him a second unsatisfactory hit, "The Days Of Pearly Spencer", and a most un-Marc-like, clinically smooth live album, *Twelve Years Of Tears*, before he and Stevo negotiated him off the label and back onto Mercury, home of his biggest Soft Cell hits. In the meantime, Almond went into detox to break his tranquilliser habit, repair his short term memory, and, once out, put together a group to tour his forthcoming glamslam of a comeback record.

Marc Almond might sometimes represent himself in song as a mass of quivering vulnerability, but he's one of pop's toughest, most enduring performers. When La Magia, the last of his groups, collapsed around him at the end of the 80s, bringing to a messy end his long musical partnership with pianist Annie Hogan, he got together with another piano player, Martin Watkins, and went out across Europe to play a series of piano-backed solo performances, including a gruelling tour of Russia and Siberia, where he took advantage of the TV cameras dogging his every move to speak out eloquently and passionately on behalf of the beleagured gay scenes there. It's a pity he rarely plays such stripped-back, naked concerts in Britain. Going on the taped evidence, these concerts reveal just how powerful a singer and performer Almond is. The tortured torch singer angle is too corny to do him justice, but his choice of cover songs, from "A Woman's Story" across Brel and the French songs from *Absinthe*, his Scott Walker numbers, as well as his own paeans to fellow sufferers like St Judy, map the depths he's plumbed, yet survived to tell the tale. Though he's a prolific writer, cover songs for Almond are, among other things, useful coordinates which help him gain a perspective on his own writing.

"I enjoy singing other people's songs more," he says. "They don't have the same emotional baggage. I do pride myself on having good taste, I do love songs. I have records from all kinds of different music: the 50s ballads, the dark ballads. I hear a song and think, 'That's for me. I can get inside it.'" □

Fantastic Star will be released by Mercury in the New Year. Marc Almond performs at London's Shepherds Bush Empire on 14 December. Jeremy Reed's biography of Almond, The Last Star, *has just been published by Creation Press.*

PHOTO: KATIE TUETON



charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

Soundscapes 15

William Orbit — Water From a Vine Leaf (EMI)
Ennio Morricone — Once Upon A Time In The West (Virgin)
Jah Wobble & Brian Eno — Spinner (All Saints)
Tangerine Dream — Beach Theme from Thief (Virgin)
Mark Shreeve — Big Trouble (Sonic Images)
Pat Metheny — As Falls Wichita, So Wichita Falls (ECM)
Rupert Parker — Icicles In The Mind (Mabley Street)
BBC Radiophonic Workshop — Variable Pitch Harmonic Hum (BBC Records)
Air Sculpture — Stranger Tractors (Neu Harmony)
Jerry Garcia — Eep Hour (Warner Bros)
Van Morrison — September Night (Polydor)
Sabres Of Paradise — Smokebelch II (EMI)
Can — Splash (Spoon)
Andy Pickford — The Furnace (Centaur)
Jonn Serrie — And The Stars Go With You (Miramar)

Compiled by Ashley Franklin, Soundscapes, BBC Radio Derby

Ultima Thule 15

Can — The Peel Sessions (Strange Fruit)
Klaus Schulze — Historic Edition (Manakin)
Ax Genrich — Psychedelic Guitar (ATM)
Ron Geesin — A Raise Of Eyebrows & As He Stands (See For Miles)
Ame Son — Catalyse (Spalax)
Happy Family — Happy Family (Cuneiform)
Paragong — Live 73 (Gas)
Cul De Sac — I Don't Want To Go To Bed (Flying Nun)
Alan Lamb — Primal Image (Dorobo)
Mani Neumeier — Privaat (ATM)
Nijiumu — Era Of Sad Wings (PSF)
Noise Maker's Fifes — Soundscapes Of The Inner Eye (NMT)
Boud Deun — Fiction And Several Days (EHP)
Saddar Bazaar — The Conference Of The Birds (Delerium)
Clem Alford — Mirror Image (Magic Carpet)

Compiled by Alan Freeman, Ultima Thule Record Shop, 1 Conduit Street, Leicester

DJ Morpheus 15

Tek 9 — Old Times New Times EP (SSR)
Phosphorus — Inspiring Light EP (Language)
Pimp Daddy Nash — Our Man In Stockholm (Mephisto)
DJ Food — A Recipe For Disaster (Ninja Tune)
Mixed Emotions — Jazz In The Eighth Dimension Vol 1 (Eighth Dimension)
Skanna — Find Me (The Remixes) (Skanna)
Henry Mancini — Mr Lucky Goes Latin (RCA)
CUSP — Space + Time/Liquids + Metals (Swim)
Harold Budd & Hector Zazou — Glyph (Made To Measure)
Le Zappalot — Enka Goes To Leopoldau 7" (Syntactic)
Seed — Vertical Memory (Beyond)
Gary Moscheles — Shaped To Make Your Life Easier (Planet μ)
Thee J Johanz — Confidential (Irdial Discs)
Lew Res — Thorn EP (Sublime)
DJ Krush & DJ Shadow — Duality (Mo' Wax)

Compiled by DJ Morpheus, The Lysergic Factory, Radio Campus, Brussels

The Office Ambience

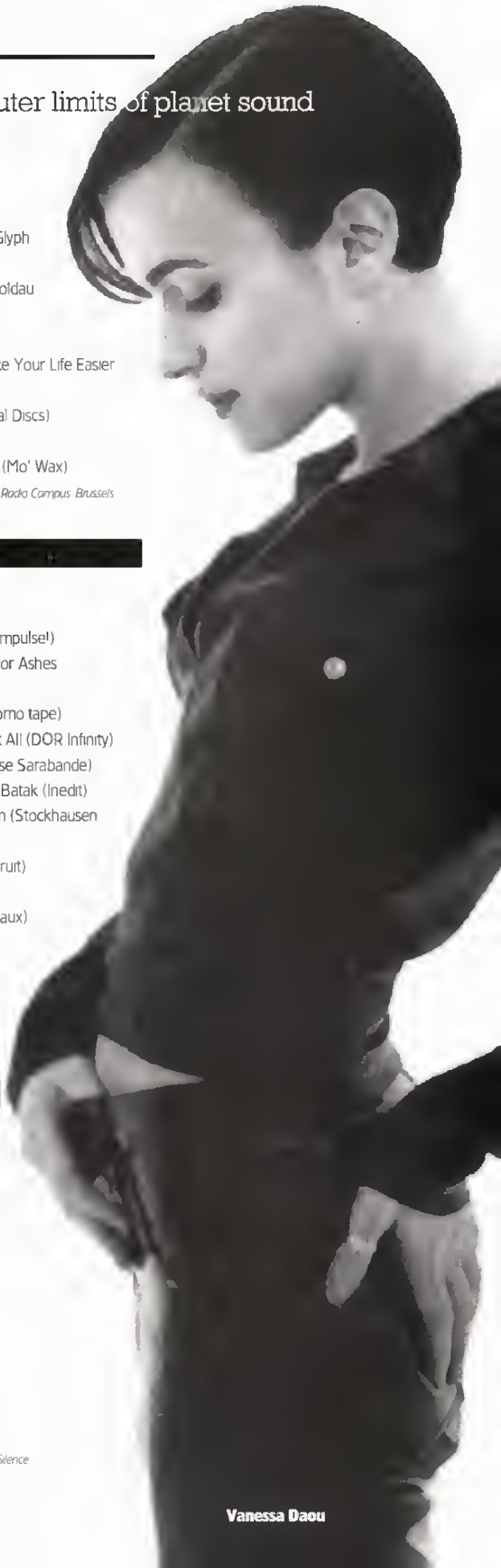
David Toop — Screen Ceremonies (The Wire Editions)
John Coltrane — Stellar Regions (Impulse!)
John Oswald — Grayfolded 2 Mirror Ashes (Swell/Artefact)
Marc Almond — Fantastic Star (promo tape)
Auntie Horror Film — Now I See It All (DOR Infinity)
Mark Isham — The Net OST (Varese Sarabande)
Various — Sumatra Musiques Des Batak (Inedit)
Karlheinz Stockhausen — Hymnen (Stockhausen Verlag)
Can — The Peel Sessions (Stange Fruit)
Vanessa Daou — Zipless (MCA)
Microstoria — Init Ding (Mille Plateaux)
The Otherside — Burn Baby Burn (Jungle Rendez-Vous)
DJ Food — A Recipe For Disaster (Ninja Tune)

Compiled by The Wire Sound System

Dodgy Group Names

Morbid Florist
Bustmonster
Crawling With Tarts
Anal Cunt
Beard Of Cheese
Pornflakes
New Wet Kojak
Rectal Death Pump
Impaled Nazarene
Meat Shits
Third Global Vagina Party
City Of Worms
Bum Gravy

All (genuine) group names compiled by Sons Of Silence



Vanessa Daou

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■ With the help of the 1995/96 Scheme, ten improvising groups were helped with tours with sums which ranged from £1,500 to £3,200.

■ Further information and application forms are available from Rajan Hooper – Music Officer, Arts Council of England, 14 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 3NQ. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be enclosed.

■ Completed application forms should be returned by 23 February 1996

The Arts Council has an equal opportunities policy and warmly welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

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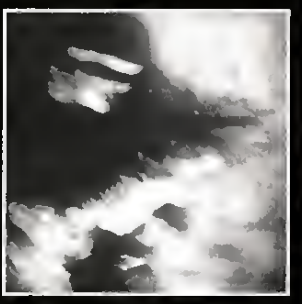
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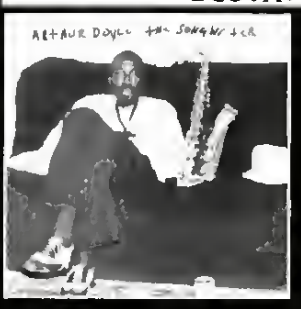


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Best known as a member of Killing Joke, **Jaz Coleman**'s new music mines a rich seam of neo-romantic classicism, Pacific Rim influences and Anglo-Egyptian fusions. Plus he's just recorded an album featuring orchestral versions of songs by Pink Floyd — which he despises. Interview by Eddi Fiegel

Symphonic

"What I write classically is romantic, it's neo-romanticism," explains Jaz Coleman. "I define that as the creation of dissonance or discordancy, so that the contrast between that and what you hope is the purest of melodies, is excruciating. That's the form that I feel passionate about with classical music."

Jaz Coleman is indeed a man of contrasts and contradictions. Best known for his role in Killing Joke, the group he has fronted for the past 16 years, he has been hailed by no less an authority than conductor Klaus Tennstedt as "the new Mahler". By his own admission, he and his music inspire almost unanimously extreme reactions. "I polarise opinion," he proclaims, as if safeguarding himself against any potential antipathy.

For the last four or five years, Coleman has been officially resident in New Zealand, but is on a brief visit to London to complete the recording of his second classical symphony and to promote *Symphonic Pink Floyd*, which features orchestral arrangements of well-known tracks from the Floyd oeuvre, arranged by Coleman, produced by fellow Killing Joke member Youth, and performed by The London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Although the project is part of a trilogy — the other works comprise symphonic versions of tracks by The Rolling Stones and The Who — according to Coleman it is not a labour of love. On the contrary, he is dismissive of the groups' influence on him — despite having grown up at a time when most of his peers would have been in the throes of lank-haired, teenage Floyd obsession. "Musically, instrumentally, it just didn't seem very interesting, a lot of that music, and I won't be doing any more of that," he says.

Despite the feeling that the new record was inspired more by commerce than art, the result, as such things go, is surprisingly creative. Perhaps as a consequence of being unhampered by admiration for the originals, Coleman has managed to give familiar tracks such as "Money", "Breathe" and "Brain Damage" a magical, epic quality — as if JRR Tolkien had written a Russian ballet score — while at the same time incorporating elements as diverse as gypsy violin solos, Arabic percussion and counterpoint. Of course, the idea of mixing East and West in a romantic context is by no means unique to Coleman, but rather than being part of the contemporary classical trend that has veered away from serial music towards a traditional tonal approach, Coleman's musical inspiration is more closely related to his cultural roots.

Born into a liberal, intellectual Anglo-Indian family, he grew up in the supremely conservative English suburbia of Cheltenham, where he was raised on a steady diet of Russian classics — Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov *et al*. By the age of 14 he had gained his violin Grade VIII as well as discovering the choral and religious musical traditions from singing in the cathedral choir. At 17, however, after a fellow (female) student on a classical music study weekend introduced him to Can, Neu! and Kraftwerk, Coleman threw in the classical towel to explore a strange mix of post-punk theatre, melodrama and mysticism with Killing Joke.

Coleman cites the punk ethos as having affected him more than any music college, but in 1981 he began studying orchestration and scoring again before beginning his first classical project, *Symphony No 1 — The Idavoll Cycle*, which he continued to work on over the next ten years.

It was, however, a need to come to terms with his own cultural identity and an attempt to confront its duality, which was to provide the next landmark in his solo career, and in 1989 he moved to Cairo to study the Arabic musical tradition. "I'm a strange mixture of genes from East and West, a child of the colonial system, and I've only resolved that uncomfortable feeling of being of mixed race in the process of going to Egypt and becoming part of the music scene in Cairo, which I have been for some years now."

The move led to *Songs From The Victorious City*, his 1990 collaboration with ex-Art Of Noise composer Anne Dudley, in which Eastern and Western traditions fused to stirringly hypnotic effect. Coleman's mystical odyssey then took him to New Zealand, the 'discovery' of which was to form not only the culmination of a long-standing quest, alongside other Killing Joke members, for 'the island at the end of the Earth', but the inspiration for his first string quartet, *Pacifica*.

"I wanted to show a darker side of the Pacific than the holiday brochures, and just try and capture it musically," he explains. "This image of the Pacific where we think of girls in grass hula skirts, coconuts and palm trees — well, yes, there is that, but there are also some really awful sides to it. Apart from testing on Mururoa, there are places which have been mined for the phosphate and are just a shell of an island, a land strip that's been totally raped."

This dichotomy is particularly poignant in the quartet's "Mururoa" movement: part one conveys the pastoral beauty and fragility of the landscape, while part two crashes rudely into the idyll via a combination of dissonance, sweeping cymbals, Arabic tabla and counterpoint used to devastating effect.

On being asked about the Baroque influence of the counterpoint tradition, Coleman says, "But I was brought up in Cheltenham, my dear. There are certain things which you just cannot escape!" When pressed on the particular influence of Bach, he spits. "I'd like to have given him a good kicking. I don't mind his *Toccata And Fugue*, that's a fantastic organ piece, but generally speaking, what he did for Western music was desecration!"

Apart from the *Pacifica Quartet* and *Symphony No 1*, Coleman has a stack of further projects awaiting completion, including a Requiem for two choirs, a second symphony entitled *Black Onyx*, as well as a further orchestral work commissioned by the Republic Of China for The Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. "I want to be prolific," he insists. "I want to achieve the masterpiece before I'm through."

Listening to the rhythmic, driving fervour of Killing Joke, it's hard to equate Coleman's strained, adrenalin-fuelled vocals with the stirring melodic tradition evoked in his classical work, and he sees a clear divide between what he expresses in each. "Firstly, I'm only interested in bands on one level, and that is extreme exhilaration. Secondly, it's catharsis, a way of exorcising myself. Things I don't really want to talk about, I sing about with Killing Joke. I've done nine albums with Killing Joke and throughout I've not done one love song, but with my classical music I can express my more personal romance, or the romance of the land, the romance of the dream, a utopian dream.

"I get very involved with the subject matter of my work. The relationship between the artist and the subject matter with the romantic is abnormally close. You are the subject matter. It's your personal experiences, so to write music I forget about music. I fall in love, I drink, I travel, I go to places I'm curious about. I fulfil my dreams and then I drink two glasses of wine, sit at the piano and see what comes out. Then I divide by three, woodwind, brass and strings, and the rest comes naturally to me now." □

Symphonic Pink Floyd *is released this month on Point (through PolyGram). Pacifica will be released early next year.*


jaz

invisible jukebox



Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of. . .

Mark Isham

Tested by Mike Barnes

In recent years, Mark Isham has become established as one of America's premier film composers, but his music also spans jazz and fusion trumpet, star session work and diversions into Californian New Age. Born in New York, Isham was immersed in classical music from an early age, studying piano, violin and trumpet. When his family moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in the 60s, he began playing trumpet professionally in local symphony orchestras. But jazz exerted a stronger hold, and in the 70s he played in the groups of Charles Lloyd and Pharoah Sanders. His session work has been exceptionally diverse. The Rolling Stones, Hector Zazou, Scott Walker and, most famously, a six year stint with Van Morrison in the 70s and 80s. Isham's first solo recording was 1983's *Vapour Drawings* on the Windham Hill label, which pioneered a style of Ambient World fusion, but his solo career became sidelined due to his increasing prominence as a film composer. Following his 1982 debut score for *Never Cry Wolf*, he has written acclaimed soundtracks for such films as *Romeo Is Bleeding*, *The Moderns* and, most recently, the hi-tech thriller *The Net*. After a five year hiatus, Isham has revived his solo career with the new album *Blue Sun* (Sony). The record combines two of Isham's abiding influences: the cool blue jazz of Miles Davis, and the systems music of Brian Eno and Robert Fripp.

MILES DAVIS

"Orbits" from *Miles Smiles* (Columbia)

[Immediately] Oh, I know that. [Sings along] Let me make sure I know the exact title of this tune. It's obviously Miles, with Wayne [Shorter], Tony [Williams], Ron [Carter], Herbie [Hancock]. I think it's "Orbits". This is great. When I first heard this period, probably in 1968, I was in my last year of high school and I'd gone back and listened to these records that I didn't get first time. About six months later I said, 'Now I get it, this is totally fantastic.' A major influence on me. There's a lot of influence I think from Ornette Coleman, dropping the piano, the piano doesn't accompany in the solos nearly as much. It's like a three horn band in some way. Very sparse, angular, chromatic playing — I like it.

It must be difficult being a trumpet player, growing up with this music and not being influenced by Miles.

Yeah. [Laughs] I think that's very true. I play a Martin Committee model, which is the horn that he played. He sort of epitomised what I though the trumpet should do. I think for a while I was stuck a little too much on Miles: his melodicism, simplicity of line. His technique is great, and in various points of his career he's been capable of playing a lot of notes. But in general, philosophically, he seems to have the attitude of less-is-more. And I tend to feel that.

And the same is true of Wayne. He tends to be a little more notey, but he has a great sense of melodicism. The more I got to know his work he also got to be a tremendous influence as an improvisor, how he constructs lines.

A lot of people like yourself, who got into Miles in the 60s, were alienated by the kind of music he went on to make in the early 70s: *Agharta*, *Pangaea*, etc. What did you think of it?

I loved it. The problem might have been that all those records were live, so they tended to be a bit long-winded. In concert, a long build up and development can be very effective sometimes in a recorded form it doesn't have the same impact. I think they would have made better records if they'd been edited more tightly. But I love that whole period. In Los Angeles I have a band called The Silent Way Project. We just play music from *In A Silent Way* up through *Pangaea*, *Agharta* and all that stuff. Just two guitars, bass, drums and trumpet with the wah-wah pedal. So I know a lot of that material to play it.

LOVE

"Maybe The People Would Be The Times Or Between Clark And Hilldale" from *Forever Changes* (Elektra)

Well, I will start to show my ignorance of popular music here. I have no idea.

It's Love from *Forever Changes* in 1967.

The only thing I was going to say is that it's mid- to late 60s. Are they English?

No, they were from Los Angeles.

I could only give you that general date from the horn parts and the recording style. Yeah, it's got those Tijuana Brass-style horn parts.

Love were part of that West Coast rock scene that would have been around in your area, San Francisco, when you were growing up. Did any of that register with you?

At that period of my life I did not listen to pop music at all. I was completely immersed in jazz. And quite frankly I didn't really discover The Beatles until I was in my 20s. I have this sort of backwards musical education from everyone else. I grew up listening to classical and then jazz and then later on discovered popular music. I was aware of The Grateful Dead and some of the local San Francisco bands and played in some bands in the San Francisco area — New Tower Of Power, but that was later, the 70s, so I never really knew this area of music at all. I was playing in classical orchestras and chamber orchestras and trying to learn my jazz.

I have a younger brother, and I heard it [psychedelia] coming out of his bedroom. And I must admit not a lot of it sunk in. I remember hearing Hendrix, though, and there was a sophistication to it that caught my ear. And The Grateful Dead, slightly later. I got interested in them because Miles opened for them at the Fillmore concerts in New York and San Francisco. So I went to see Miles and stayed for The Dead and got the idea of what this psychedelic rock was all about. I could relate to that. It was the period after *Bitches Brew*, so Miles was coming on and doing these long improvisations, and The Dead came on and did the same thing but from another point of view. I quite liked it. Again, live, some of those things have a

different impact, but if you record them and listen back to them, all the momentum and the excitement of being in the audience and the electricity of a live show [is taken] out of the equation, and it perhaps does seem a little self indulgent.

VAN MORRISON

"Streets Of Arklow" from *Veedon Fleece* (Polydor)

Sounds familiar. [Vocals come in] That's who I thought it was. Van! I'm not sure where this is from. It's not a record that I did with him.

It's from *Veedon Fleece*.

Now that surprises me. Because on some of the really early Van records his voice is significantly higher. His voice went through a change at one point. And I always associate this with that earlier sound. Great. Well, what can I say? I didn't know much about Van before I started to work with him. I knew who he was: somebody played me *Moondance* and I said, 'That's not jazz, but he's trying.' So that's all that I knew about Van until I went to work for him. And then I really got what he was, and the tradition that he comes out of, and what he'd done to it and with it, the whole world that he created. He's a great poet, and when he gets out there and really wants to sing it's unbelievable. I've never seen anybody with such passion and fire.

At the time that you played with him his shows were reckoned to be either perfunctory or brilliant depending on which night you went.

It's true. Consistency isn't a word that you'd apply to Van. But boy, if you caught him on a good night, there was nothing like it. It was just extraordinary.

You played with him for six years. How did it start?

He was doing *Into The Music* and wanted a piccolo trumpet like a baroque trumpet on "Penny Lane", that sort of sound. I was one of the few peple in San Francisco that had specialised in piccolo trumpet due to my classical background. I also had worked in the rock world. I think his road manager recommended me. I came along and overdubbed some parts and he said, 'Would you like to do some more, and do you know a good tenor player?' I called up Pee Wee Ellis and the next thing we knew we were his horn section for the next six years.

How do like being a session player? Is it fulfilling musically?

I'm very fortunate. I did, for a while, just session work, played on jingles, anything. But in the last seven years, the only session work I've done is when they want me to be me. I worked with some really good producers — Don Was, Paul Fox, these guys are class guys, and I'm working with world class artists. So it's great if I get called up and they say, 'We've got this track with Willie Nelson and Sinead O'Connor, would you like to come and play a trumpet solo on it?' Yes, I think I will — it's not a bad day's work. [Laughs] I love it. You get a chance to be involved with musical personalities and get a sense of who these people are. And it's always a learning experience to get in and see what their music is about and what I can contribute.

You played with Scott Walker on *Climate Of Hunter*. What was that like?

That was great actually. Scott is a fascinating personality. I'd only done one film at the time I worked for him, but looking back I can say that he was more like a film director than a record producer in a sense: he talked in terms of colours and didn't say what notes to play. He would describe moods and shapes and emotions. It was really interesting.

FRIPP AND ENO

"Evensong" from *Evening Star* (EG)

[Immediately] Let me just make sure. Pretty sure I know who it is. It's *Apollo*, isn't it. Brian Eno? Not *Apollo*? I should have waited until I heard Fripp. This has to be the one with the mirrors on the cover. *No Pussyfooting*.

Close. It's the one after that: *Evening Star*.

Oh, it is. That's my problem. I lump all this music into a category and never remember which record it's on. This whole movement — to me the genres were really breaking down. Here were some guys coming out of rock, glamour rock, if you will, who were to me creating really new music, a very sophisticated, very interesting form that has much in common with fusion jazz in a sense in that it was improvisational and finding new improvisational forms which is what I thought jazz needed to do.

The late Coltrane motion abandoned traditional rhythm and harmony and went into freeform, and the other side of jazz went into fusion — how fast can you play over a funk beat. And so to me, this motion of Fripp and Eno was very refreshing. It was a big influence on me, *No Pussyfooting*, this record, all Eno's records.

One of Eno's things is that instead of composition being a definition of notes it becomes a description of a system, and that system can simply be a way that you patch up two tape recorders so that they infinitely generate sound. Or it can be a description which you give instrumentalists. 'Play a C and a G whenever you like or play an F and an A as much as you like. Start.' There's a system and you set it in motion, but there's an improvisational aspect and a random aspect to it. And he gets this from John Cage and a lot of the experimental classical music guys who were developing systems music ideas. His variance was applying it to commercial music, popular music. One of the things that I've been interested in is applying it to the jazz realm. I carry a looping device and use it in the band and make live loops against the backdrop of a jazz rhythm section. A guitar player like David Torn — his whole concept of playing is based on things like that, to create big blocks of sound and insert them into the music. And all of that fundamental philosophy comes from Eno. I can't say it was original with Eno, but he was the one that codified it to the popular culture.

BERNARD HERRMANN

"God's Lonely Man" from *Taxi Driver: OST* (Milan/Arista)

I definitely don't know it.

It's Bernard Herrmann, the soundtrack to *Taxi Driver*.

[Surprised] Is it really? That just goes to prove that I'm definitely not a well-educated film music guy. I never set out to be a film composer so I never studied it. I've actually a shocking unawareness of other people's film scores, and I've never really given myself a course in it since I've started. And that's a very famous score.

There seem to be a number of film music permutations: scores like this, which stand up as pieces of music in their own right; music that first and foremost works with the visuals; and the marketing exercises, with the soundtrack album as spin-off from the film featuring new tracks by Pearl Jam or U2, for instance.

It's always an interesting challenge because a film composer's first job is to serve the film. And I would say that 50 per cent of the time serving the film well means making music that's not really suitable for an album by virtue of the fact that the music cues tend to be in these little chunks: you end up with 40 pieces that are 42 seconds long. I try to make the cues work as they go from one to the other, so that if you put them all together they'll have some semblance of continuity, but you can't always do that. And it doesn't make real continuity sense. You do not end up with a really good, well-written symphony — it's impossible to do that. So you're really at odds a lot of the time. I think it's rare and totally by chance you'll find a score that can be lifted out of the film without any re-recording, edited together and make a really great album. And then sometimes the theme is really beautiful and the rest of the album is just the incidental music. And that's what it is, that's the job — to write music that gets you from scene to scene a lot of the time. And it can't really be expected to have much more function than that.

How did you get into writing film scores?

It was not a career goal of mine, but I had already been delving into various eclectic sorts of music, and with a friend had written some music for Chinese instruments and synthesizer. He was a Chinese instrument master, I did the synthesizers. We wrote about three or four pieces trying to get a record deal, which we didn't get. We promptly forgot about this music we'd done, except that we'd passed our cassettes to a few friends. We thought no more about it, but one of these cassettes found its way into the hands of a film director who really liked it and tracked me down and asked me to score his first movie, which was *Never Cry Wolf*.

It was a very challenging experience and I learnt a lot. It occurred to me that this is quite good: get an opportunity to write instrumental music, get paid to write it and have someone pay to produce it!

AARON COPLAND

"Estribillo" from *Three Latin American Sketches* (Sony Classical)

Well, once again I do not know it, so I will have to rely on my rather askew musicological background to guess. If it's a film score it's pretty adventurous. It would be a very brave composer

This isn't a film score but he has written them.

I hear a sort of Stravinsky-ish influence

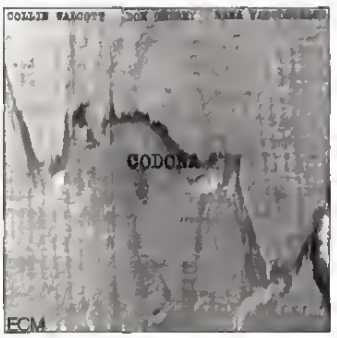
It's Aaron Copland, one of the *Three Latin American Sketches*. This one was the last to be written, in 1971.

Is it really? That's a good choice This is one of his last orchestral pieces I was up against a rather daunting task of scoring a remake of *Of Mice And Men*, which, of course, he wrote the film score for I purposefully didn't listen to his score I'm sure when I saw the film years and years ago when I was really young that I heard it, but many years later I didn't remember it and I kept it that way, because of the idea of listening to that and saying, 'Oh my goodness, what am I going to do now?'

What do you think about the use of popular classics in film scores — specifically Oliver Stone's use of Samuel Barber's *Adagio For Strings* in *Platoon* to elicit a rather obvious emotional response?

It's an interesting issue If you look at it from the film maker's point of view I understand Barber's *Adagio For Strings* is his best known work and arguably his best work, certainly one of the great American orchestral works And so you figure that that's an eight minute piece out of however many hours of music this guy wrote in his life, and then you're asking a composer to come in and in six weeks write something that has the same depth The chances of doing that aren't great So from a film maker's point of view, yes, most of them are interested in having original music for their film, but a lot of them will say, 'I want music that works' And in the case of Oliver Stone, I think he just wanted something that was without a doubt so emotional that he really didn't care about it being original He was more concerned that that moment in the film just has to be so emotionally impacted And I believe they recorded a specific version for the film, timed to fit. So in that case it became film music, constructed to work exactly

Generally, getting [soundtrack] work is based on your past work and more and more it's like that. I want to make sure this doesn't get taken the wrong way, but music is a very difficult language to understand and to talk about And a lot of producers and directors find it difficult to communicate about music And so you find a lack of confidence in these people to be able to make decisions in terms of music, because it's not a language they're comfortable with So they often rely on saying, 'Have you done something like I want before? Because then I know you can do it'



CODONA

"Mumakata" from *Codona* (ECM)

Well, I don't know for sure I haven't heard it before I could just guess It's got an African groove I would guess it's Hugh Masekela, but I could be way off Is it Brazilian? Those aren't koras? Or berimbaus?

Berimbaus. It's actually Collin Wallcott, Don Cherry and Nana Vasconcelos, from 1978, under the name Codona.

[Looks at sleeve] Unbelievable I know all those guys but I never heard this record This is great I have to go get this Well, you got me! I think Nana is great. I used to see him play with Trilok Gurtu and Jan Garbarek. His stuff is wonderful

As it's from 1978, it's a kind of early blend of improvisation and World Music.

Definitely, and it's such a blend I can take some solace here in that I was culturally confused by looking at the list of instruments they've got here They're not from a single culture

There are more and more 'pan-cultural' groups now, and with access to huge sample libraries anyone can make their own mix 'n' match World Music.

I've never thought that musical genres should be considered as things that have purity I'm not an ethnomusicologist, but you could certainly say, in the Western tradition, that the String Quartet is a timeless, age-old tradition, and as long as you understand that and respect that, there's no reason why you can't break it. I'm sure it's the same within these other cultures I'm sure there is a traditional Brazilian ensemble that has the same role within that culture — but why not use it in other ways? I guess the only danger is that the culture that grew up around that tradition might get lost, you don't want to lose the valuable aesthetic ideas that came out of that tradition, but there's certainly no reason that you can't build upon it

I think this conservative attitude that the genres have to remain pure is destructive and stifles creativity to a degree I have those collections of samples of exotic instruments because I love that And also part of my job as a film composer is to pick refreshing palettes of sound and to create a palette of sound that fits a particular film If you have a film with a Brazilian character and an African character and an Irish character in the film then it's very powerful to use a berimbau and an African drum and a penny whistle in the score It really brings to life the cultural interaction So for a film composer it's great to have, in our modern 'global community', access to these traditions and sounds And also that you respect them and try and learn as much as you can about them

Was Don Cherry an influence at all?

Funnily enough, he's someone that I never spent a lot of time listening to, although I was very intrigued by Ornette [Coleman]'s music, the period that was piano-less, I was really attracted to that the harmonic freedom that he opened up, leaving the chords out and letting the bass and the soloist define the harmony without having to be told by a chordal instrument what is going on I've always liked Don's sound — he has that warm intimate sound that I love in a trumpet



WEATHER REPORT

"Unknown Soldier" from *I Sing The Body Electric* (Columbia)

[Immediately] Weather Report, "Unknown Soldier" This record changed my life, this track. [When I bought it] I put it on and couldn't get it off side one for two days And then finally I turned over and the second side is just as good Something about this just summed up the classical influence, the jazz influence, the idea of space, it's all in this record, all of the stuff that really interests me in music The drama, the mood, it's fantastic It tells a story It's programmatic [Laughs]

This is from 1972. The general consensus is that fusion started to go downhill from here on in. What do you think to that?

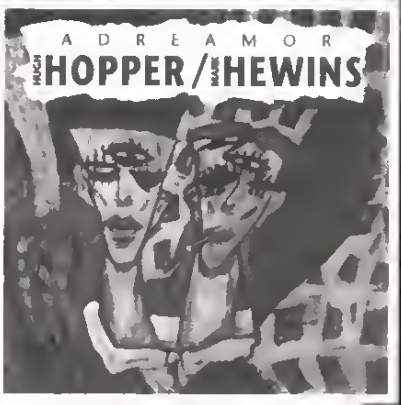
I liked most of it. I thought towards the end [Weather Report's] production value wasn't as high as it could have been But that's hard to say because production values were changing so much The production value on this is fantastic, and it was recorded in 72 I own every record they ever made The quality of playing is so extraordinary

I think that the jazz-fusion promise was definitely delivered, just because those concerts were amazing events At some of Chick [Corea]'s Return To Forever concerts the audience was ecstatic Stylistically, I liked Weather Report as the best of the fusion bands because they had that simplicity and directness about them I just thought that these guys were exploring a way of making fusion and jazz and more sophisticated music available to a wider audience and that interests me Believe me, after playing in clubs for ten people for a number of years it's got to interest anyone, because any artist is interested in communication And if you are communicating in such an abstract way that no one wants to communicate with you, what's the point? You want to get that interaction with an audience I'm always interested in how you can take a sophisticated vocabulary and make that interesting to as many people as possible I thought Weather Report were great at that Chick's solution was energy and adrenalin And by the time Al Di Meola was in the band they were just playing incredibly fast and that was personally never my choice Other bands took that to an extreme where you got a sense they were just playing fast to play fast They're playing in 15 1/2 as fast as they can just because they can do it — it's not saying anything If three notes can do it, it's better than 15 notes □



NEW RELEASES THAT MATTER

Hugh Hopper, legendary bass player with the seminal Soft Machine line-ups, joins Soft Heap guitarist Mark Hewins for a ravishing series of duos exploring the textures and interplay of sound itself. These recordings find both musicians at the height of their powers, combining their collective experience of the 'Canterbury Scene', their jazz and left-field musical interests. Hopper and Hewins map a previously uncharted, entirely contemporary soundworld.



HUGH HOPPER & MARK HEWINS
ADREAMOR
Hugh Hopper bass guitar, electronics, etc
Mark Hewins guitar, electronics, etc
live and studio recordings
CD: IMP CD 19423



BARDO STATE ORCHESTRA:
THE ULTIMATE GIFT
Jim Dvorak trumpets, whistles, voice, percussion
Ken Hyder drums, perc, khoomei & kargirah vocals
Marcio Mattos bass cello, percussion
CD: IMP CD 19425

The Bardo State Orchestra combines the talents of three of the most accomplished musicians on the British jazz and improvised music scene in a haunting and radical music. 'The Ultimate Gift' fuses their jazz roots with a longstanding interest in both Eastern philosophies and musics to create a new but timeless musical vocabulary; the results are deeply evocative and resonantly spiritual. This is undoubtedly a new soul music.

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sound check

November's choicest CDs and albums — reviewed, revered, reviled

November winners:
Node, Holly Cole, T Power, John Tchicai & The Archetypes

In soundcheck:
Autechre, David Bowie, D'Cruze, Deep Listening Band, James Dillon, Bill Frisell, Rickie Lee Jones, Bill Laswell, Michael Mantler, Joe McPhee, Ben Neill, Nightmares On Wax, NON, Joshua Redman, Sonic Youth, Suns Of Arqa, John Surman, The Velvet Underground and more ..

In brief:
Music at the outer limits of Electronica, rock and noise



WIRE WINNER

Analogue adventures

Node
Node
DEVIANT DVNT 5 CD

Node's debut is one of the most exotic, original Electronica albums of the year because, paradoxically, it's rooted in the past. Node is a quartet including two well-known producers, Flood (U2, etc) and Ed Buller (Suede!), who are also collectors of massive prehistoric analogue synthesizers — the sort of huge edifices, patched together with jack-to-jack leads, that look like they must require planning permission to erect. This spells out Tangerine Dream in letters writ large. Listening to "Slapback" you can almost see the sequencer lights flashing metronomically through a fug of joss sticks. Near the end of the closing track "Propane", the debt is made overt with the introduction of the main theme of "Fauni Gena" from TD's semi-forgotten classic *Atem*.

That aside, this is no mere retro homage or pastiche. What makes *Node* so compelling is that the tracks are more abstract and more rhythmically exciting than their influences (of course, Node have the advantage of 20 years more musical history behind them, and better studio technology), plus the analogue sounds are warmer and more seductive than their digital peers.

It's strange to think that what was once cutting edge technology now sounds organic, but a track such as "Levy" is exactly that — pointillist note clusters at the start pinpoint a vast space for the shifting sequenced rhythms to pass through, leaving an amorphous sonic wasteland in their wake. Questions were poised 20 years ago as to whether electronic music can have 'soul'. The belated answer is yes, with more besides. Embrace Node's back-to-the-future ethos.

MIKE BARNES

WIRE WINNER

Bohemian rhapsodies

Holly Cole
Temptation
METRO BLUE 834 348 CD

As an idea, an album of Tom Waits songs covered by a female torch singer sounds about as appropriate and appetising as *Meatloaf Sings Kate Bush*. Surely Waits, like Bush, boasts a sensibility that, before anything else, is indelibly gendered — what purchase could a woman vocalist have on his standard territory of boozed-up bohemian, dissolute hipster jive? The answer, as Holly Cole demonstrates on this sharp, sly and seductive collection, is twofold. Firstly, Waits's *noir* story-songs (best embodied here by "Invitation To The Blues") tend to feature the narrator not as participant but as observer, a role for which maleness is no prerequisite, and secondly, buried under the gruff, tough cover of that broken glass growl of a voice, he hides a heart of Andrex softness and has a claim to be the most unabashedly romantic songwriter of the past 20 years.

As Rod Stewart's well-meant but misfired Waits covers album so tellingly proved, the trick that's needed with these songs is to underplay them, and Cole's cool tones (she has a wonderfully thirsty voice, parched and edgy) are splendidly suited to that task. Her singing borrows only from the best — a dash of Rickie Lee Jones, a hint of Sarah Vaughan, substantial nods to fellow Canadian kd lang, and, most often and most interestingly, lashings of Peggy Lee. The bruised poise of her version of "Soldier's Things" from this album would sit perfectly on a compilation tape next

to Lee's "Black Coffee" or "Is That All There Is?" The instrumentation is tactful and supportive, framing Cole only with piano, bass and percussion, and entrusting what might elsewhere be guitar solos to a bluesy harmonica, but moves when required into richer textures a brass band cushions "The Briar And The Rose", while a cello steers "Shiver Me Timbers" towards exactly the right blend of mournful lushness and seafaring lilt.

The generic promiscuity of the album (late night jazz with excursions into Country, folk and even doo-wop) saves it from the trap of excessive tastefulness into which it sometimes threatens to fall. Above all, it's Cole's spooked, warm, mysterious voice which commends it — conclusive proof that Waits works in drag.

ANDY MEDHURST

WIRE WINNER

Intelligent service

T Power
The Self Evident Truth Of An Intuitive Mind

SOUR 003 CD/LP

T Power's debut album will undoubtedly fan the flames of the debate currently raging in drum 'n' bass after Simon Reynolds's provocative article in *The Wire* 136 ('Sounds Of Blackness'). It purports to be a concept album, a drum 'n' bass summation of the history of the world. Many will criticise Mark Royal, aka T Power, for his pretension, and, I must admit, I can't find a single strand of musical evidence to support his concept. But that's unimportant. Royal has merely seized on the seemingly limitless possibilities of Jungle and its latent ability to take on the greatest musical challenges, and put a philosophical spin on matters. More importantly, he's raised the question of whether artists should be pilloried for attempting to raise their art to a higher level. And if they do, does that somehow denigrate those who choose not to follow? Surely there's ample space for co-existence? Why make meaningless comparisons?

Philosophically, this is a confused, paradoxical record, a bleak dystopian view of a technological future realised through the utilisation of state of the art computer hardware. On a purely musical level, it's a triumph a seamless collage of cyber-dub, phosphorescent breakbeats and spectral Electronica. A number of producers working in this field have made implicit the link between Techno and Jungle, but Royal is perhaps the first to synthesize the two successfully. The opening track, "Trapezium", begins in typical Ambient style, before the snares unfurl. Time and again, metallic breaks fly across the speakers like laser beams, spiral in and out of subtly evolving soundscapes, meld and reconfigure themselves. But never does it have the impact of the first track, "Rule Britannia", where a muted rendition of the patriotic theme struggles to be heard above the chaos and confusion of massed urban and industrial noise. A potential benchmark for future 'intelligent' Jungle releases.

PETER McINTYRE

Further consumer info: labels not named in this column should be available at good specialist retailers or, increasingly, in high street Megastores like HMV, Tower and Virgin. In emergencies, contact likely distributors such as These, RTM, Impetus, Recommended, Vital, etc. . .

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Arka Sound: through Vital

Astralwerks: 114 West 26th Street, New York, NY 10001, USA

BvHaast: through Cadillac

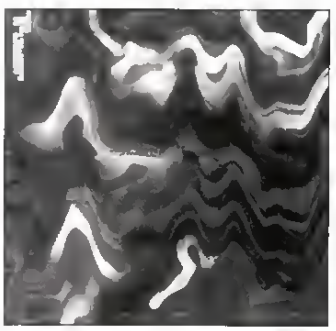
Carrot Top: 243R North Lincoln Drive, Third Floor, Chicago, IL 60614, USA

Clear: through RTM/DISC

Complacency: through Cargo

Composers Recordings: 73 Spring Street, Suite 506, New York, NY 10012-5800, USA





WIRE WINNER

Polarised explorer

John Tchicai And The Archetypes
Love Is Touching

X-TALK BW 055 CD

The Archetypes have been John Tchicai's principal group for around three years, and this album, recorded around 18 months ago, is an impressive CD debut. It's a sparkling, stimulating display, mixing real-time performances with prepared electronics, and pure improvisation with realisations of graphic scores and conventionally-notated compositions.

If, in this tour of his soundworld, you think Tchicai has latched on to popular styles, remember that he was probably there first. Long before rap (evoked on "99 1/2 Days"), the spoken (or, rather, *declaimed*) word featured in his work, going back as far as 1964's *New York Eye And Ear Control* which included poet Amiri Baraka (then still known as LeRoi Jones), while the almost harmolodic jostling of tracks like "Yam" has its roots in procedures devised during the same period by The New York Art Quintet.

The album draws together the central threads of Tchicai's music over the last 30 years, from the blocks of sound-colour and ceremonial use of percussion which characterised his Danish group Cadentia Nova Danica, to the gregarious

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eclecticism of his late-80s European small groups

Since 1983, the tenor sax has replaced the alto as Tchicai's main instrument, and his playing has become less angular listen to pieces like the title track and "Bless Your Heart" The tenor also brings out the flavour of the blues in some unexpected contexts Yet, unlike many (actually, most) of his former New Wave comrades, Tchicai has not retreated into convention On *Love Is Touching* he continues to explore and innovate

BARRY WITHERDEN

Autechre
Tri Repetae
WARP 38 CD/MC/LP

Once again, Autechre trawl through the murky depths of their analogue equipment to give us a composite portrait of digital dirt The formula should be familiar by now — fuzzy, rumbling basslines, beats made of static, and dusty, parched Detroit-isms — but it's no worse for wear

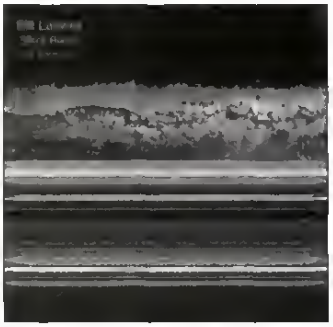
As evidenced on the brilliant "Clipper", Autechre's occasional genius lies in their ability to traverse Electronica's peculiar mind/body divide Like Aphex Twin or µ-Ziq, Autechre use rhythm both as a textural palette and as a vehicle for the twitchy, apoplectic Electro-funk of cyber-boys rewiring sex through their computers It's almost as if they're taking Johnny Rotten's infamous description of sex as "a few seconds of squelching noises" as the *Kama Sutra* of future sex — scary, but frighteningly compelling

As part of an even more sinister commentary on the human/machine interface, most of the tracks on *Tri Repetae* layer the standard blips and squeaks over elegaic string sounds and synth washes It feels like the soundtrack to obsolescence the lively chitter-chatter of computers and technology gets progressively perkier and grows in volume while the more human sounds become sombre, hollow, pale, dead weight

Tri Repetae works on the same principle that created the high lonesome sound of old C&W, but replaces the pedal steel guitar's emphasis on space with the synthesizer's ability to call up a vista of claustrophobic expanses It's the sound of psychosis as the final frontier

PETER SHAPIRO







Deviant: through Vital

DOR Infinity: through DOR Infinity

ECM: through New Note

Ecstatic Peace: Forced Exposure, PO Box 9102, Waltham, MA 02254, USA

Em:t: through RTM/DISC

Experimental Intermedia XL: PO Box 1754, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013, USA

Fire: through RTM/DISC

FMP: through Cadillac, Impetus

David Bowie
Outside
RCA 74321 31066 CD

If you were David Bowie, what would you do at this stage in your career to make yourself interesting again? This is after ten years or more of records that go from engagingly mainstream to flat-out dreary a stint with an honest-to-goodness locker room band that the world seemed too embarassed to even acknowledge (although the first Tin Machine album has its moments — no, really), a stocking-filler CD-ROM marginally more entertaining than Peter Gabriel's, oh, and a coolly-received exhibition of wallpaper Well, what you'd do, obviously, is make *Outside*

Apparently the first of a series — the full title, reading from the spine, appears to be *1 Outside The Nathan Adler Diaries A Hyper Cycle* — Bowie's new record has been seen by some as simply the return to a nostalgic meal ticket He's reunited with Brian Eno to make what sounds like the follow-up to *Lodger* (which would make everything from the ungainly *Scary Monsters* on look like an unnecessary digression) It's certainly the best thing he's done since then, and the most in-your-face as far as over-assertive flamboyance goes *Outside* comes as a fun-size multimedia package, decked out in lurid computer art trappings that look like page proofs from *RayGun* magazine, with the first part of a coup-narrative (part Ellroy, part William Gibson, wholly *Wild Palms*) that liberally namedrops the likes of Tina Brown, Damien Hirst and the Tate Gallery's Nicolas Serota Nothing like wearing your credentials on your sleeve (Bowie was probably just smarting from the fact that no one's been remotely interested in analysing his sleeve inconography since *Lodger*)

I'll leave it to the denizens of some remote Internet site to fathom the narrative logistics of this "non-linear gothic Drama hyper-cycle" about art murder But I'd happily defend Bowie's right to create such a thing *Outside* is a persuasive argument for the return of the concept album, a much-maligned form which was never really anything more than a means of structuring 40 minutes or so of music around a specific idea and mood The concept album doesn't have to be about pinball players or the decline of the West as seen by Roger Waters, it's simply a means of building a set of songs around a notion of continuity, around concrete ideas of the circumstances of a record's production and reception At a time when the average pop CD comes laden with umpteen different producers, bonus tracks, remixes and great hits rehashed, pre-planned cohesion begins to look interesting again And as for "non-linear", all that means is you have your CD shuffle button, feel free to use it

The investigations of art 'tec Nathan Adler simply structure these songs in such a way that you have certain lyrical threads to pick up on — like the name Ramona, a word that simply sounds good in song, recurring from time to time, or a scrap of narrative, the only one I could actually pick out, on "I Have Not Been To Oxford Town" But the real narrative here seems to be in the links *Outside* subliminally forges between Bowie's current aesthetic and moments in his own musical back-story his current identification with Nine Inch Nails (his touring partners in the US), and the references back to *Diamond Dogs* and *Aladdin Sane* (pianist Mike Garson's discordant Rachmaninov splashes) It's compelling, abrasive noise that lets up only for the odd lugubrious moment, it's inspired and sometimes strangely comical He's done the right thing, thrown commercial quality-control out of the window and gone for the pure play of it. The chance of Bowie making a record that mattered seemed as slim as the prospect of him making a decent film, let's hope he doesn't blow it all by persuading David Lynch to make *Outside The Movie*

JONATHAN ROMNEY

Bud Alzir
Bud Alzir
HANSOME HAN2 CD/LP

2Bad Card
Hustling Ability
ON-U SOUND ON-U 78 CD/LP

Bill Laswell
Silent Recoil (Dub System One)
LOW LW001 CD

Back in the original days of dub, two of the key words were 'attack' and 'delay' Analogue technology and manual tape-editing gave the music a sharp, jagged quality Sounds jarred and collided,

rebounding off one another in a sonic vortex, disappearing in a vapour cloud of harsh echo and static. Today, dub has (d)evolved into something else. Digital technology has smoothed out the rough edges.

Bud Alzir, 2Bad Card and Bill Laswell all appeared on Kevin Martin's *Macra Dub Infection* compilation (the latter as Automaton). Bud Alzir's contribution ("Morocco") was an appealing form of digi-dub, but placed against the riotous invention of Bedouin Ascent and 4 Hero, it seemed a little too formulaic. Their debut album merely confirms that. The original raison d'être of dub was to subvert listeners' expectations, but much of the music here seems to have been put together simply to fulfil them. Certain tracks ("Zone One", "Zone Two", "Ten Golden Rules") have a certain edge, a feeling of deconstruction, but they only serve to throw the remainder into sharp relief.

Hustling Ability is essentially a solo album by Carlton 'Bubblers' Ogilvie, keyboard player for On-U Sound stalwarts Dub Syndicate, featuring Adrian Sherwood on production and guest appearances by such luminaries as Horace Andy and the ghost of Prince Far I. Heavily influenced by the smoother, roots-influenced productions of Everton Da Silva and Dennis Bovell, it's a travelogue, a journey through the interlinked styles of this most mystical of musical genres. Ska/rocksteady, lovers rock, dub: they're all here, immaculately performed and produced. It's a welcome return to form for this torch-bearing label.

(Dub System One): the parentheses betrays Bill Laswell's intentions. It's an implicit declaration that he's doing no more (or less) than using the components of dub for his own purposes. This is a trio of soundscapes, employing dub techniques as a means of reinforcement. "Amphora" is structured around a booming bassline, but it's far too linear to fit into dub's fractured pattern. "Sombre Stream" drops you into a weightless space where disorientation is the guiding principle — but only at the end. The centrepiece, "Undercurrents", is pure dark ambience: a landscape of brooding menace, where solar winds howl across the surface at night and the darkness is so heavy, it prevents the dawn from breaking. No attack, no delay, just an enveloping stasis. A brilliant release, but not a dub album.

PETER McINTYRE

D'Cruze
Control

SUBURBAN BASE SUBBASE CD2 CD

Jay D'Cruze is a veteran Junglist and a forerunner of drum 'n' bass's current shift towards combining dark beats with softer, more airy, melodic textures. His recent "Are We In" 12", and especially its flipside "Heaven", signalled a new level of accomplishment in his work, and is among the most creative and original drum 'n' bass plates of the year. The gloriously effective contradiction it achieves between an Ambient and atmospheric surface and skidding and juddering filigree drum patterns, suggests an unusual talent for judging sounds and textures, and an approach as individual in its way as Goldie, Gerald or Dillinja. *Control*, D'Cruze's debut album (which includes Asend's excellent remix of "Are We In"), provides further evidence of his characteristically thoughtful and broadminded attitude pulling together different styles and sounds — HipHop, Electro, orchestras and saxophones — as well as the more usual Junglist breakbeat devices.

D'Cruze's identity as a producer emerges almost negatively from these cuts: by the spaces he leaves, by the care with which he avoids getting caught up with one particular line of thought or emotion, by his intricate sidestepping of in-yer-face ragga violence, and by his avoidance of the Trance/Techno elements currently so popular in 'intelligent' drum 'n' bass. But what unites these tunes most is the distinct sense of formal dislocation: almost all of them suggest: snare rolls whizz towards climaxes which never happen, a hi-hat skips forward, yet always glances back, drum breaks constantly start and stop, layers of activity congeal and dissipate but nothing ever truly resolves or concludes and no line of logic is ever quite completed.

"Come Back", Ruf Intellegence" and "Lonely" are all intriguing, inventive and intermittently brilliant little worlds — though D'Cruze's unwillingness to take the obvious routes, and the uneasy combinations and sequences of sounds, textures and events which he chooses, can be perplexing. Though some of the tunes here sound more like questions than answers, D'Cruze's curiosity and originality make *Control* a very forward-looking debut.

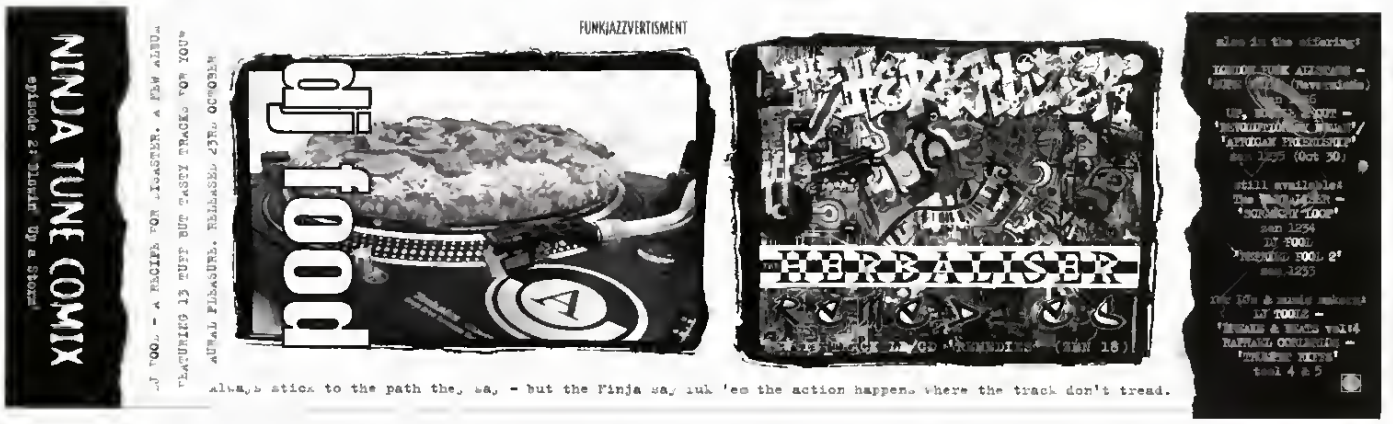
RICHARD SCOTT

Deep Listening Band
Sanctuary

MODE 46 CD

Deep Listening is a useful term. On the one hand, it describes a way for Pauline Oliveros's admirers to get the most from her distinct but ego-less co-compositions, on the other, it is an instruction to her musical collaborators, a description of the state of mind needed to make a piece. Peter Davey, discussing religious building in *The Architectural Review*, writes that "even in the most materialistic societies, to be human, we need to rise above the ordinary. We need a measure of ourselves against the unmeasurable." Both architecture and music have always had the means to give us this, and these recordings by The Deep Listening Band celebrate both arts by using the acoustics of the Sanctuary of the Trinity Methodist Church in Kingston, New York. In "Invocation And Processional", both Stuart Dempster (playing trombone and didgeridoo, and an Oliveros regular) and singer Julie Lyon Balliet move about the Sanctuary while Oliveros (accordion) and organist David Gamper stay put.

The title track and "Hi Bali, Hi" gain a more electronic timbre from the use of Gamper's Expanded Instrument System (EIS). This is a sound processing system similar (in spirit) to ones developed by all manner of electroacoustic performers from Stockhausen to Robert Fripp to Tod Machover's 'hyperinstruments' and Michel Waisvisz's 'sound thief' system, recently on display at London's Colourscape Music Festival. But those guys are in showbiz compared to The Deep Listening Band's self-effacing, practical spirituality. Quotes from a sermon by the album's 'spiritual advisor', the Reverend Arlene Dawber, speak of the need for 'Sabbath Rest', "a time where we must walk away from the situations that are engulfing us and create a 'sanctuary in time'." Of all the music purporting to be for meditation or



'healing', the first four tracks on this album are some of the best examples I have heard. If only I had the time to listen to them. The final track, "Non Stop Flight", is a 20 minute extract from a two hour marathon by an extended version of the band. Though there are some wonderful noises, it's a more difficult listen — however deep. I think you had to be there.

John Cage once said that the purpose of music was to prepare the mind for peaceful contemplation, or something along those lines. At its best, The Deep Listening Band make the sort of music Cage might have made had he been just a composer.

JOHN L WALTERS

James Dillon
James Dillon 2: Accroche Note (Chamber Music)
MONTAIGNE AUVIDIS MO 782037 CD

The world of contemporary music is more ephemeral than that of pop. Most pieces — particularly the highly notated, difficult-to-play sort — are heard for no more than a single performance in front of a tiny audience — a complex bundle of modernist bricks tossed into a vast deep sea of indifference, causing few ripples. The work's chance of survival depends on the composer being very good, very charismatic or bloody lucky. James Dillon appears to qualify for all three of these criteria. After a slow start (he is self-taught), his scores have been dusted off and practised hard — and now receive respectful performances all over Europe.

This CD follows *James Dillon 1*, which consisted of two pieces (*Ignis Noster* and *Helle Nacht*) for The BBC Symphony Orchestra. The chamber music subtitle is misleading: this CD is dominated by five densely written solo pieces for piano (good), clarinet (very good), voice, flute and drums (not so good — a piece for solo drummer is still a drum solo in my book). *A Roaring Flame* is a duet for voice and double bass that extracts some rich abrasive timbres from Jean-Paul Celea's bass. *Come Live With Me* is a piece of chamber music for voice, piano, percussion, flute and oboe, etc, that requires soloistic playing rather than the instinctive intimacy of group performance. I certainly missed out on the quivering "subtle frissons of eroticism" promised in the sleeve note.







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Interworld: R03 Box 395A, Brattleboro, VT 05301, USA

KBZ 200: through SAM/Vital

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K Vox: 75 Rue de Lourmel, 75015 Paris, France

Leo Lab: through Impetus, Cadillac, These

Low: through Pinnacle Import

All seven pieces, though freshly recorded "in the presence of the composer", date from the late 70s to the early 80s and feel very much of their time — speaking in an argot that is already half-forgotten. So this CD is a historical marker, a defiant claim that such music is not ephemeral, but can live on in the scores and in the virtuosity of European classical musicians, and can be rediscovered (and preferably re-sung) in the distant future. This may be a pretty good recording, but it's not a record.

JOHN L WALTERS

Michel Doneda/Paul Rogers/Le Quan Ninh
Open Paper Tree
FMP CD 68 CD

Louis Sclavis/Ernst Reijseger
Et On Ne Parle Pas Du Temps
FMP CD 66 CD

Jean-Marc Montera
Hang Around Shout
FMP CD71 CD

Open Paper Tree is an album brimming with non-idiomatic invention, and proves my point (see my review of Doneda's *Ogooue-Ogoway* in *The Wire* 138) that Doneda and Rogers shine very brightly indeed when the percussionist(s) shows flexibility and plays sparingly. In this regard Le Quan is exemplary. Schooled in contemporary composition (a John Cage specialist), he knows the beauty of understatement, economy and silence. On "Variation On Tree Digression" and "Arborescence Only" (both around 20 minutes), his liquid cymbals and precise, sheet metal attack work up an equatorial humidity with Rogers's turnid bass. In fact, Rogers is a revelation here, playing at his most texturally liberated, and demonstrating just how underemployed he's been in numerous free jazz groupings where rhythm section duties are still on the agenda. Doneda's soprano saxophone is as colourful and loquacious as one of Messiaen's exotic birds, as tremulous and windswept as a shakuhachi. Like *SOC* before it, *Open Paper Tree* is a milestone European Improv recording, as highly individual in the 90s as AMM's *The Crypt* and Peter Brotzmann Octet's *Machine Gun* were in the 60s.

If one stunner wasn't enough this autumn, FMP have recorded another in the shape of *Et On Ne Parle Pas Du Temps* by veteran reeds player Louis Sclavis and cellist Ernst Reijseger. Live action by this duo has been rare since their formation in the mid-80s, but this 1994 Berlin recording demonstrates that theirs is a dialogue of exceptional beauty and sensitivity. "Et" and "Pas" have an elegant, 'classical' chamber feel, "Le" is jazz-tinged, with Reijseger strumming the cello with the lightness of an acoustic guitar, "Louis" is a gorgeous bass clarinet solo, spiralling with upturned phrases, and "Ernst" is a terse and scrambled parody of a Bach cello suite. The fluency of these improvisations is breathtaking.

Improv is running over with guitarists who have entered the free forum via jazz, rock, Heavy Metal, noise or an inextricable fusion of these genres. In an era this oversubscribed, and with radical innovations like non-idiomatic playing, table-top deconstructionism and guitar inventing/building now well within the mainstream of Improv guitarland, plus the wide availability of digital add-ons, it's become increasingly difficult to sound significantly different from the rest of the crowd. So, although French guitarist Jean-Marc Montera imaginatively augments the guitar with tapes and objects, you could certainly mistake some of his explorations for those of Fred Frith (with whom he has a duo), Stephan Wittwer, Elliott Sharp or Erhard Hirt. Yes, it's easy to become blase, but try not to be. Montera shapes and structures his solo improvisations with a great deal of care, and is worth hearing.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Brad Dutz
Krin
INTERWORLD 919 CD

Steve Shehan
Indigo Dreams
K VOX KV2DD2 CD

The thoughts seeded by various attempts at some kind of Third-First World, magic-science, ethnic rock/jazz/art music hybrid throughout the 60s and 70s, have in many ways outlived the direct musical outcomes of these fusions (although here I'd naturally except the work of Jon Hassell, to whom

both the records here, the Dutz especially, owe a great debt the first musician to use the term 'Fourth World'). Nonetheless, we've yet to arrive at the point where all such music-as-global village scenarios (or even the majority) feel unforced enough for us to feel smugly *post-* about the whole notion

Percussionist Brad Dutz has been kicking around the LA contemporary music scene — such as it is — for the best part of the last 15 years, doing time as the kind of scrupulously cool yet professional sessioneer that scrupulously cool (in a Gap-wearing kind of way) pop stars use to enhance their street image, and, occasionally, even their music

Which one can live with The rather less palatable preconceptions I brought to this record were Dutz's association with LA fusion guitar heroes like Scott Henderson, Jeff Berlin and Steve Smith So, frankly, *Knn* comes as a bit of a surprise, echewing as it does just about any West Coast fuzak cliches

Dutz creates rich and complex textures and rhythms by multi-tracking dozens of the world's more esoteric tuned and untuned percussion instruments, a little tackily enumerated in the CD sleeve notes for my liking, but played with grace rather than muso flashiness The mix is augmented here and there by highly sympathetic contributors, notably clarinettist/flautist Vinny Golia and guitarist Nels Cline The strange thing about *Knn* is how old fashioned it feels, despite its yearnings for a new world It owes a lot to Hassell (nowhere more than in Dutz's own processed trumpet on "Snowy Egret"), but mostly it recalls Paul Horn's work with Nexus, and even (yes!) *Gazeuse*-period Gong

Steve Shehan's sweeping suite of live playing and sampled field recordings is an altogether more ambitious affair It's an exquisitely crafted album, with Shehan and others adding (again) a music shop full of ethnic instruments to superbly arranged recordings of N'baka Pygmies, Moroccan street merchants, Amazonian monkeys, Bulgarian folk singers, French church bells, Ethiopian singers, American trains, Japanese mourning ceremonies

Shehan appears to be edging towards a new, post-nationalist concert music, and certainly there's an absolute avoidance in his music of the saccharine, rosy TV-ad cliches that make the likes of Deep Forest so distasteful Overall, though, I'd say that *Indigo Dreams*'s title — an affectionate nod to Satyajit Ray — gives a lot away most of this music feels a lot like all but the most extraordinary film music highly detailed, ornate, moving, but ultimately missing something

Both these otherwise formally very different records wear their cross-fertilizing colours a little too proudly they're ambitious and intermittently very enjoyable, but I suspect their slightly-too-90s internationalism will make them both date very quickly

SIMON HOPKINS

Simon H Fell
Music For 10(0)

LEO LAB CD 013 CD

Music For 10(0) was commissioned by the Leeds-based Termite Club Festival for its tenth anniversary celebrations in 1993 It's a 'comprovisation' in the proper sense of that term (and a well-worn term it is, too, invented by pioneering improvisors and not by Markus Stockhausen, as claimed in *The Wire* 139) Essentially a symphony for ten improvisors, Simon Fell also integrates notated passages inspired by his passion for big band swing and avant garde serial composition Plus, there's room for spoken text, here written and declaimed by the poet Out To Lunch — aka music journalist Ben Watson This recording of the work lasts for 75 minutes, though the 'full performance' is said to be nearer 90 minutes

Admirers of Fell's earlier large-scale *Compilation II* (1990) will know all about his predilection for intense, multi-layered, sometimes chaotic energy — Ivesian at times The ten piece group assembled on *Music For 10(0)*, who deliver similar contrapuntal pleasures, but with a sharper focus on combinations of instrumental colour and contrasts in dynamics, includes names from that previous line-up (Paul Hession, Pete Minns, Charles Wharf, Alan Wilkinson) and other undersung Yorkshire-based improvisors like Mick Beck, Paul Buckton and John McMillan Amid the disciplined ensemble playing, the 11 movements feature some fine soloing, notably Beck's tenor sax ("Movt VIII — Jumbos") against Mingus-

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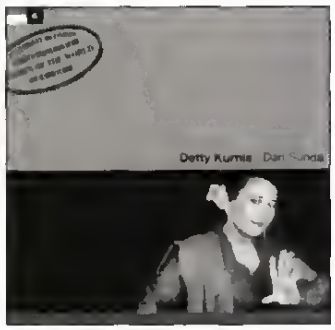
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influenced, swinging horn and rhythm sections. "Movt IV — Virgin", the most unusual, involves an unsettling juxtaposition of English pastoralism and dissonant free improvisation with Wilkinson's angry baritone in fine voice.

Ben Watson's text is disappointing — certainly it lacks the complex resonances of the richly inventive music (although to be fair to Watson, the text, from 1991, wasn't written to be performed with improvised music). However, the literary dimension of *Music For 10(0)* does represent a brave leap into the unknown, since there is no 'tradition' to speak of that unites poetry and improvised music in the UK. Reminiscent of punk poetry by John Cooper Clarke, Seething Wells *et al*, Watson delivers a dated, verbose rant about the commodification of music by high street stores, and which teems with long-winded attacks on easy targets (eg Richard Branson, Sting). The ceaseless, vitriolic tone will probably test the patience of most listeners after repeated hearings and, in time, push the challenging, multi-dimensional music on this CD into that ludicrously 'populist' pigeonhole (invented by Watson for Fell's music) called 'punk jazz'. Fell's idiosyncratic vision is at its most adventurous here, but he will need to be more judicious in his choice of text if this major work is ever recorded again.

CHRIS BLACKFORD







Bill Frisell
Live
GRAMAVISION/RYKODISC GCD 79504 CD

It came as no surprise to learn that aside from re-sconng old Buster Keaton silents, Bill Frisell has soundtracked an animated TV special of Gary Larson's *Far Side* cartoons. Aside from the comparable surreal style of capsizing conventional views of the phenomena of downhome Americana (Larson with the pen, Frisell with the guitar), there's a distinctly zany quality to everything Frisell does. Frisell's humour is based, like *The Far Side*, on subtlety and understatement rather than on bold and extravagant gestures. You know the technique's there all right — but the enjoyment lies beyond the technique itself. Whether in the sprawling, squalling, soaring lines of the hypnotic daze induced by the opening "Throughout", or in the exquisite minimalist choreography for bass, guitar and drums of "Pip Squeak", Frisell is always challenging our notions of the guitar soloist. This is mastery equal to that of a McLaughlin or Metheny — he just doesn't display it in a manner which is easily related in print or related to in the concert hall. And yet there's no need for repeated brow-furrowing listening, it trips off the disc with as much joy and facility as anything those two guitarists have produced. The audience, on this 1991 recording at least, seem a little wary on occasion, their applause polite rather than ecstatic, even after a cheerful and chunky romp through "Have A Little Faith In Me". Not that it hinders Frisell or his stalwart sidekicks Kermit Driscoll and Joey Baron — who needs 2000 people to play off when these guys strike sparks from each other so well and with such intensity?

Comparisons between Thelonious Monk and Frisell, initially regarded as odious, are given enormous credence on this album, perhaps because of the intimacy of Frisell's inspiration. For all the plaudits lavished on him, there's a sense that the guitarist is destined to remain a prophet without honour for many years yet. His subversion, like Monk's, is so subtle yet so huge — neither outright postmodernist nor modernist, he's just a modest little guy playing tunes like you've never heard before, but which you can whistle, goddammit. We think we're so sophisticated up here at the sharp end of 1995 — but are we ready for Frisell even now?

PAUL STUMP

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Rickie Lee Jones
Naked Song
WEA 9362 45950 CD/MC

In 15 or 20 years some new Nick Cave figure of the moment will proclaim Rickie Lee Jones a lost angel, a big influence, and she will suddenly become the figure of much veneration. You know you're ageing when you're drinking with some people and you start a sentence, "Well, you know that song "Chuck E's In Love"?" and they all go, "No". Well, anyway, what I was *going* to say is what I always say, which is that *that* song is her millstone, and that if she ever does become some future's rediscovered saint it will be for other songs, other trajectories. Over the years, I've converted so many people to her cause and affect and what they usually say is something like "This is what I always thought Joni Mitchell — or AN Other wispy singer/songstress — should have been like." There is a tremor in her voice, an uncertainty in her life, a secret hinterland in her lyrics which resist easy appreciation, and this 'X' factor has doomed her — or rescued her — to a life on the margins of the margins. She doesn't fit in anywhere these days, but maintains a devoted following, and *Naked Song* is mainly for them. It's a sketchy resume of her career — an eccentric selection of her songs — delivered completely solo, so low (*"She ain't cryin' anymore, she's just singin' a little low"*.) Not so much unplugged as unpopulated. Apart from the closing version of "Autumn Leaves" when some shadow adds stately upright bass support, the other 14 songs are just her voice and herself on guitar or piano.

It's an odd selection, but then us devotees expect nothing less from her, but even speaking as a devotee I'm not sure that it's an entirely successful conceit. I had one of the most transcendental nights of my life seeing her play live and unpublicised in a tiny club once, but she had some backing that night (as well as a low strung electric guitar around her hips). To be sure, there is certainly a long EP's worth of versions here which turn my blood to ice, or lava, or tequila, or powder or condensation: for the version of "Coolsville" alone, I would give away most of my record collection past, present or future. But the sense of reworking some of the other selections in such an unadorned way escapes me. Songs like "Livin' It Up" and "We Belong Together" originally worked precisely *because* of their out of time arrangements, and the idea of stripping them down makes as much sense as, say, Frank Sinatra doing "Summer Breeze" with only a dobro for company. Half of her last album was a mesh of acoustic textures anyway, so giving us stripped down versions of songs from that set (like "Altar Boy" and "Stewart's Coat") makes a different kind of less-sense.

The other (semi-) live album she did (*Girl At Her Volcano*) and the album of

covers (*Pop Pop*) both made a complete kind of extracurricular project sense — tortured epiphany and laid back lounge flight respectively — whereas this is for a large part too timid, too obviously a record company sop (Yes, there *is* a version of "Chuck E's In Love".) Still, the acolytes will not want to be without it, for the very good reason that when her voice is in flight, it remains one of the last great authentic wonders of the modern Songworld. (As she puts it: *"I too have choosen/That which left no choice/To sing without loving/My solitary voice"*.) But if you're a neophyte then I'd stick with recent studio journeys like *Flying Cowboys* and *Traffic From Paradise*.

IAN PENMAN

Eleni Karaindrou/Kim Kashkashian
Ulysses' Gaze
ECM 1570 CD

Third generation Greek soundtracking after Theodorakis and Vangelis and not entirely unrelated in intent or content, marrying the visionary and the banal, the contemplative and commercial, the national and the international. It never does quite what you'd expect — love it or hate it. It sounds like Karaindrou's homage to Holy Minimalism, with hairshirt, dark-hued orchestration (horn, accordion, cello, etc) and sombre, Kancheli string chorales of sphinx-like serenity providing a mirror in which solo viola lines (courtesy of ECM's redoubtable Kim Kashkashian) can admire their sinuousness in solitary splendour.

Most of this disc is taken up with variations on a *Ulysses Theme*. There's precious little to distinguish one from another, to this writer's ear, but Karaindrou's admirable concision (whether or not the shortness of the tracks is dictated by the visual strictures of Theo Angelopolous's Cannes-stormer of a film — to which this is the soundtrack — isn't clear) is a diverting take on this careworn musical genre. For once, it's as well that the long-breathed phrases don't get much of a chance to over-extend themselves or languish in spiritual stasis, and the miniaturism is accomplished and never clumsily handled. And in stark contrast to the cold-front sobriety of so much of this kind of stuff, there is an inviting interior warmth to Karaindrou's modally sumptuous, folk-inflected harmonies, and indeed the plaintive themes transposed onto them, suitably evocative of unspoken, diasporadic nostalgia and chilly, forbidding winter sunlight.

Not perhaps the most important or engaging release of this or any other year, on ECM or any other label, but an admirable, exemplary and hopefully indicative treatise on restraint and innovation in a classical style rapidly disappearing up its own conscience.

PAUL STUMP

Detty Kurnia
Dari Sunda
RIVERBOAT TUG 1011 CD

Indonesian singer Detty Kurnia, now in her mid-30s, can be acclaimed as one of the best popular singers in Asia. Her voice is high and light, with a sensuous suppleness that recalls the queen of Indian film music, Lata Mangeshkar. She soars in like a vocal hang-glider above the whooping chants of a male chorus or the phlegmy cackling of a Javanese puppeteer.

Dari Sunda, first released in 1991, was a landmark, as the first Indonesian recording by Japanese producer Makoto Kubota. Kubota set himself the double task of raising the production values of Indonesian pop and of convincing the Japanese that they were part of an Asian music scene (and needn't simply imitate American models). In fact the vast world of Indonesian pop, with its scores of genres, had a self confidence which the Japanese lacked, and *Dari Sunda* displays a rich soundscape of gamelan breaks, traditional drums and rebab fiddles, and a delightful 'kroncong' group of violin, ukulele and flute — all mixed into a pop production with guitars and keyboards.

The only problem is that Kubota and Kurnia did the job even better on their second album, *Coyor Panon* (1993, released in the UK by Flametree). On that album, the production is subtler, and the traditional Javanese elements create a surprisingly dark, mysterious sound. On *Dari Sunda* there are moments of dodgy soft rock guitar and heavy-handed drum programming — this earlier record has a slight flavour of bubblegum, but at least, like the Indonesian cigarettes, it's clove flavoured.

CLIVE BELL

Michael Mantler
Cerco Un Paese Innocente
ECM 527 092 CD

At some point in the late 80s I lost track of Michael Mantler's recordings, and this is a welcome reunion. Mantler's work in the 70s with people like Carla Bley was rich with filmic and literary references, which informed both his themes and structures. His quite distinctive arrangements gave the early recordings a unique quality which is sustained into this new project, though in a more sophisticated form. If this new work is your first encounter with Mantler, there is a rich seam of comparable material to unearth from his past work.

As with several of the earlier works, *Cerco Un Paese Innocente* uses a text as its basis, in this instance, the writings of Italy's foremost modern poet Guiseppe Ungaretti. Mantler has made a song cycle punctuated with bridging interludes which together form a cohesive work every bit as compelling as Ungaretti's plaintive poems.

Mantler's skill here, as on other works (1976's bizarre *The Hapless Child*), is in forming unusual ensembles of instruments. Here we have The Danish Radio Big Band augmented by strings, synthesizer, bass, drums, the obligatory angular electric guitar parts and Mantler himself on trumpet. This combination coalesces in the songs perfectly to support the gloriously unexpected voice of Mona Larson. Doubtless it is pure prejudice on my part, but I never expected the voice of a smouldering Spanish diva from someone with a name like that. She sings the poems in the original Italian with a spine tingling elastic sensuality, airborn and passionate — one of the most beautiful voices I have ever heard. There is a quality in Mantler's work which this voice exemplifies, something exotic and exuberant which is barely contained by complex, post-colonial manners.

A fine introduction to the recordings of Michael Mantler and a ravishing work in its own right.

PAUL SCHÜTZE

Autechre. tri repetae.
the new album released november 6th.

Autechre. tri repetour.
october. 26 manchester granada studios. **27 kidderminster** market tavern. **29 nottingham** sam fay's
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19 manchester roadhouse. **22 belfast** queen's university. **24 dublin** tivoli. **25 cork** art hive

soundcheck

Joe McPhee/Lisle Ellis/Paul Plimley
Sweet Freedom — Now What?
HAT HUT ARTCD 6162 CD

Ellery Eskelin
Jazz Trash
SONGLINES SGL 1506 CD

Sweet Freedom — Now What? is a drummerless homage to Max Roach, taking as its starting point the highly politicised period of the 60s which gave rise to the *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite* McPhee's sleeve note explains how the 30th anniversary of the American Civil Rights movement was for him the occasion for a reflection on the difficulties of freedom What transpires is a restrained, delicately probing collaboration The material ranges from a spiritual, to Roach tunes, to complex original compositions Some of the pieces are built on Roach's solo improvisations Like anything McPhee does, it packs a lot of ideas into one album — it's certainly not the facile re-creation of great Roach compositions that some might have made Even at moments of relative abandon there's a powerful sense of structure and the need for freedoms to be negotiated It has to be said that the high seriousness of the project comes close to undermining it at times But on the whole, it's a committed reflection on Roach's work that will reveal its depths over some time

Jazz Trash features a trio led by another of America's more wayward saxophonists. Ellery Eskelin plays tenor and has, by the sound of it, a considerable mistrust of jazz One way out of the impasse seems to be to look for new textures with unusual instrumental combinations His spirited *Figure Of Speech* for Soul Note was a percussion, tuba and sax affair, the new album finds him working with Andrea Parkins on accordion and sampler, and Jim Black on drums Recorded a year ago in New York, *Jazz Trash* is a sporadically successful set of compositions which work their way through some fairly oblique musical ideas Despite the title there's no half-arsed pastiche going on — Eskelin takes his wry view of the world seriously Letting the wheezing melancholia of the accordion loose in the fragmented rhythmic environment Eskelin favours makes for a quirky sound indeed But such is the dispersion of energies that it's frequently easy for the listener to lose the plot altogether
WILL MONTGOMERY







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Paul Misraki
Movies To Listen To
TRAVELLING K 1503 CD

Marcel Carne
Movies To Listen To
TRAVELLING K 1502 CD

Georges Delerue
Movies To Listen To
TRAVELLING K 1501 CD

As part of the celebration of cinema's first centenary, the French *Movies To Listen To* series is a laudable and innovative idea On these CDs, key passages from film soundtracks are edited and made into evocations of the complete work. Crucially, snippets of dialogue are kept in alongside the musical score, which allows them to provide a context for the music Plots are summarised in English on the sleeve so as not to discourage non-French speakers

Paul Misraki was an occasionally charming songwriter who wrote a series of soundtracks for post-war French comedies His relentlessly bombastic style quickly becomes wearisome Inane plots might be a partial explanation, but not an excuse Unless you are French and over 60 — not too many *Wire* readers, I venture — this is a release to ignore

The success of the Marcel Carne collection is due to having both a great director and two inspired composers — Maurice Jaubert and Joseph Kosma — at its core The moment in *Hotel Du Nord* when the secret lovers are mesmerised by the sunrise while a street band is heard through the window, or the fairground ambience in *Les Enfants Du Paradis*, are just as magical on record as they are on screen

I am inclined to think that actors and directors, rather than classically trained composers, were the first to realise the possibilities recorded sound offered which the theatre could not intimacy, ambience, a chance to exploit the more subtle cadences of the spoken voice Musicians like Georges Delerue were not so much the instigators of this revolution as the talented respondents to it Delerue worked with many of the New Wave directors — Truffaut, Godard, Malle — and also with more musical actors than the theatrical bellowers Misraki had to contend with In the passages from *Jules Et Jim*, the musical focus is really Jeanne Moreau's voice (she was soon to duet with Miles Davis on *Lift To The Scaffold*) In *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, Emmanuelle Riva goes even further, whispering raw emotion over a skeletal waltz The ten minute section extracted from Godard's *Le Mepris* is sublime Delerue's score effortlessly conjures up the film's subject matter (the omnipotence of tragedy), and Godard demonstrates his grasp of sound design techniques by drowning the dialogue in this sea of sonic pathos at seemingly random moments, as if to point out the importance of the unsaid, or as a fatalistic gesture of distrust towards the power of his characters over their fates
SYLVESTRE BALAZARD

Ben Neill
Green Machine
ASTRALWERKS/CAROLINE ASW 6159 CD

Ben Neill has a great ear for small, meaningful changes in timbre, a trumpeter's ear, you might say On this mainly electronic, low-density music his talents are focused on an array of stunning synthesizer textures His sensitivity to sound takes many forms his mutantrumpet, a wonderfully gimmicky-looking triple-belled brass instrument, is an invention that enables him to radically switch trumpet timbres without the mouthpiece leaving his lips His use of this instrument, especially in collaboration with composers such as Nicolas Collins (also an inspired inventor), shows a distinctive voice in a crowded tradition

There is something intensely appealing about the sound of a lonely, reverberating trumpet against a dense, harmonically rich soundscape — think of Miles, of Jon Hassell, the 'question' phrase of *The Unanswered Question* by Charles Ives, the uncredited trumpeter on The Temptations' "Papa Was A Rolling Stone", Mark Isham's best film scores Neill adds his own tributary to this little delta of styles by basing his electronic backing squarely on the teachings of LaMonte Young At their most effective, the electronic backwashes, which incorporate and "extend Young's theories of tuning harmonics and

numerical values", are full of detail, and create a kind of compositional structure Gleaming sounds scan the harmonic series like a trumpeter's warm-up exercises, the sonic equivalent of rainbows refracted in oily puddles

At a full multimedia performance of *Green Machine*, I imagine you would see Neill marshalling his banks of synthesizers from the MIDI outputs of his mutantrumpet, but on this CD there's a disappointing lack of trumpet playing Neill and his co-producer, Mikel Rouse, may have got so hooked on the gorgeous voices they were generating that they forgot to finish the record Or this may have been a hard-headed commercial decision, given the success of low-density music in the current marketplace

Certainly the intrusion of a lacklustre machine bass drum pattern in "Sistrum" (the weakest track) will give Neill's music a legitimacy in areas where the beat (if not feel) is everything Down in the dancehalls, over a powerful undistorted sound system, the dinkiest of drum sounds can sound like a divine benediction

Neill will do more and better, but this CD makes a pretty good postcard from the front line Astralwerks have issued a remixed 12" which twitters in the accepted fashion, but there's a lot more to Ben Neill than one man, a drum machine and a trumpet

JOHN L WALTERS

Nightmares On Wax
Smokers Delight
WARP 36 CD/MC/LP

Considering that this is George Evelyn's first album release in four years, it's bizarre that *Smokers Delight* feels like nothing more than a collection of sketches and blueprint grooves There's nothing here as breathtaking as "Aftermath" or "Dextrous", let alone anything as fully realised as "Case Of Funk" *Smokers Delight* is a bit like thumbing through an artist's sketchbook of doodles — it's vaguely interesting, but only as a reference

The disc is comprised of partially realised scribbles of disco keyboards, samples of diva vocals (both male and female), fragments of guitars and jazz funk congas It's certainly not your average Warp release — it's influenced more by Roberta Flack than Derrick May For an album aimed at someone lost in herbal mind fog, pasted to the sofa by inertia, the album's basslines aren't deep enough to achieve that sensation of spaced-out heartquake The mixture of soft soul, retro-Electro and abstract HipHop is too soporific to be blunted, too sleepy to be stoned

The grooves are so heavy, slow and suffocating that the mechanics of *Smokers Delight* become unintentionally jarring like falling asleep with your head drifting to one side, then suddenly snapping back to attention Where good dub or Electronica fazes rhythm with hazy dynamics and schematic forward motion, NOW just slow the tempo a bit. All in all, a disappointing return

PETER SHAPIRO

NON
Might
MUTE CD STUMM139 CD/LP

The Stallonisation of Judge Dredd was a serious enough blow to the self-esteem of lone renegade rugged right wing survivalists the world over Now here comes Boyd Rice, aka NON, masquerading as Victor Mature in one of Cecil B DeMille's lesser Old Testament epics But, based on the Darwinist doggerel of one Ragnar Redbeard, the world as outlined by *Might* isn't so much waiting for a saviour as just laying there, ripe and ready for the taking by any gun-wielding fuckhead with a beard for brains Boyd purports to believe in such nonsense, as indeed he must if it's to cram in the craw of panty-waist liberals from here to eternity The trouble is, Boyd's worst intentions fall right through the yawning gap of a supposed bourgeois target thoroughly bored at being epate-ed these past 100 years So the bad news about this thoroughly daft, yet quite likeable, if somewhat zany undertaking is how Boyd Rice, exemplary noise-maker and once intrepid investigator of ugly, arcane American mysteries, has finally posited himself in some future pigeonhole waiting to be picked and chuckled over by Jonathan Ross The drivel, albeit beautifully intoned in Boyd's darkest baritone, renders dreary what might have been his finest most sustained compositions since the heady 12 minutes plus of "Embers" His looping and texturing of variously pitched frequencies on a track like "Force", out of the depths of which a submerged organ round fights for air, suggest far better than words a world in an unequal struggle to maintain its equilibrium, and "Great Destroyers", constructed from the sound of sharpening knives, is as chilling as Rice/Redbeard's manifestos are comical The noise aside, *Might*'s solitary pleasure is to see Rice shoot himself in the foot by allowing, against everything the record professes to stand for, his loopy, somewhat feebly stated philosophy to tame the elemental force of his noise loops Wherever you stand, a hollow victory

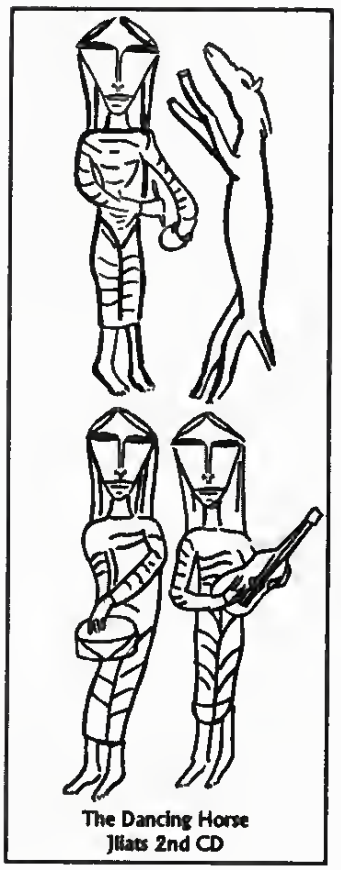
BIBA KOPF

Hal Rammel
Elsewheres
PENUMBRA CD001 CD

Hal Rammel/John Corbett
The Devil's In The Details
PENUMBRA CD DD2 CD

Hal Rammel has been inventing and building instruments since 1977 Fuelled by his interest in surrealism, he is also a visual artist, historian, pedagogue and radio presenter His first CD release is an hour's worth of alien time signatures and imagined landscapes, conjured by Rammel through the medium of a device he calls his "electroacoustic sound-palette" Sounding at times similar to Hans Reichel's remarkably expressive daxaphone, the sound-palette consists of a series of perpendicular rods of different lengths attached to a contact-miked wooden artist's palette By looping and processing through a variety of effects pedals, Rammel builds dense, fertile, bubbling soundworlds, whose attendant squeaks and murmurs jostle for your attention If on first listening these excursions into reduced gravity appear homogenous, closer listening reveals distinct locales and gateways into lucid, otherwise dormant parts of the brain

Outside the American Midwest it is a little known fact that Chicago music critic and *Wire* correspondent John Corbett is also a free improvising guitarist. *The Devil's In The Details* is, I believe, his first recorded outing It's not a question of 'Is he any good?', or whether he'll earn himself a place in the history of improvising guitar players on this album there are no ego battles or crippling fear of Improv history (a response one might imagine in such a well-informed critic), but a series of



The Dancing Horse
Jilats 2nd CD

conversational, fragile (quieter than quiet) sketches that speak of sensitivity, openness and daring

Rammel pairs up on musical saw, sundry percussion and more of his own instruments the devil's fiddle (a delicate drum-roll imitator based on an old German street instrument), snath (single-string instrument with a neck made of a scythe handle), and triolin (like an acoustic version of the sound-palette) Rammel and Corbett share a number of common enthusiasms avant garde art movements, Chicago's legendary Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, and author Christopher Small's concept of 'musicking' — a vision (and historical reality) of a convivial, functional, community-based music beyond the realms of commerce When the two play together the result is tip-of-the-tongue, exciting improvisation and detailed, often humorous interplay A trio CD by Rammel, Corbett and violinist Terri Kapsalis is promised soon

PHIL ENGLAND

Enrico Rava
Electric Five
SOUL NOTE 121 214 CD

Enrico Rava
The Pilgrim And The Stars
ECM 847 322 CD

Enrico Rava
The Plot
ECM 523 2B2 CD

Trumpeter Enrico Rava has been a major voice in Italian jazz for 25 years, but I've not heard anything as impressive by him as the new *Electric Five* With the twin guitars of Roberto Cecchetto and Domenico Caleri, and Gianluigi Trovesi on alto sax and bass clarinet, plus bass and drums, it's an unusual but strong line-up

Apart from Miles Davis's "Boplicity" and "Milestones", the compositions on *Electric Five* are by Rava, with some early numbers from his ECM albums reworked Though several tracks capture the lyrical essence of Italian jazz — cool without being enervated — there's some high energy playing too, as on the opening "Da Silva", and Rava's work takes on a new edge He remains a follower of Miles Davis, though with more technical control than Miles But his association with free jazz luminaries like Archie Shepp and Steve Lacy still leaves its mark, and his warm timbre becomes much coarser on the high notes That connection is reflected in some of the material, "Overboard" could easily be mistaken for an Ornette Coleman dirge

Electric Five points up the weaknesses of the two ECM reissues with guitarist John Abercrombie, worthwhile though they are *The Pilgrim And The Stars* and *The Plot*, from 1975 and 1977, feature an ECM house band of Palle Danielsson and Jon Christensen on bass and drums The combination of Abercrombie and the Scandinavians leads to that depression of spirits that sometimes afflicts the label's products The end result is emotional disengagement and blandness *Electric Five* provides the right context for Rava's playing, and marks a promising new departure

ANDY HAMILTON

Joshua Redman
Spirit Of The Moment: Live At The Village Vanguard
WARNER BROS 9362 45923 CD

No surer way for Redman to place himself among the canon of 'great' saxophonists than to put out a live album recorded at the Village Vanguard, where Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane and Joe Henderson all recorded classic sessions Redman's fourth disc is his best yet, a sweeping summation of his career to date It may also be a watershed, one can't help but feel that Redman says so effectively what he has to say on this record that the way ahead must contain some shift of direction The album is dominated by Redman originals, and it's some mark of his maturity that they have such ringing authority already

Aided by the expansive Pete Martin on piano, he tosses off phrase after phrase with the deceptive insouciance that has become his trademark. Blowing freer than his studio work, his playing has the feeling of immediacy that is so lacking from the work of most players of his generation

Redman's sleeve note praises jazz audiences for giving the music what he feels is its uniquely dialogic character He certainly has this one eating out of his hand at the slightest hint of a blues lick they wipe the dribble from their chins and whoop as one For some listeners this will be a major demerit. But to go on to argue that Redman is playing along with the sweat-drenched mythology that gives his form of jazz its sheen of authenticity would surely be too carping

WILL MONTGOMERY

Joel Rubin With The Epstein Brothers Orchestra
Zeydes Un Eyniklekh (Grandfathers And Grandsons)
WERGO SM1610 CD

Klezmokum
Jew-azzic Park
BVHAAST 9506 CD

Stewart Curtis' Klezmer Groove
Too Loud For Dinner
MABLEY STREET MSP 9503 CD

In the 1950s one of the most popular dance bands in Brooklyn was The Epstein Brothers, playing the Jewish traditional tunes brought to America by immigrants from the 20s onward Later, klezmer music went into decline, until being revived in the mid-70s as part of a rediscovery of Jewish roots Fortunately, The Epstein Brothers are still going strong, led by 83 year old clarinettist Max Epstein, and this Wergo album has them providing authentic dance backing for the much younger Joel Rubin Rubin is a clarinettist from an academic and classical background who has become a klezmer authority — he also programmed the three excellent klezmer anthologies on the Trikont label, ranging from earliest recordings to 90s treatments including one by Elliott Sharp Rubin's flamboyant clarinet is showcased here on 16 tracks of Jewish-American wedding music, lovingly recreating the dance band style, or in the case of The Epstein Brothers, just carrying on as they've been playing since before the war

The extraordinary strength of the klezmer revival means that there are now around 250 klezmer groups in the States Back in Europe we have the excellent Klezmokum Don't be put off by the wacky *Jew-azzic Park* title Burton Greene's Jewish jazz outfit has a real talent for understatement Greene himself is a pianist from the New York 60s loft scene This is Klezmokum's second CD, sadly no longer with Michael Moore The fresh sounding rhythm section of Robert Haliffi's drums and Larry Fishkind's tuba support the two clarinets of Perry Robinson and Hans Mekel in a loose, witty jazz reworking of Greene's favourite tunes from the Jewish tradition The group are at their best when creating a quiet melancholy — Mekel's clarinet is particularly heartbreaking, and Patricia Beysens's singing on five of the tracks has just the right mix of sadness and lightness The klezmer material is broadened by the inclusion of a Romanian piece, a beautiful and rhythmically complex Sephardic song, and a couple of Greene's own compositions, including the very silly title track. But even when you leave that out, there's over an hour of affectionate, good humoured playing here, and enough charm to float a synagogue

The British clarinettist Stewart Curtis places traditional Jewish material over the tight jazz funk of Brad Lang's bass and Hans Ferrao's drums The resulting tension — sad tune meets cool strut — works well, though some might find the playing a tad too neat for its own good The opener is a spirited "Reggae Freilach", followed by Chris Batchelor's lovely muted trumpet on "Lipstick On Your Chollah" The mood is mainly brisk, but there's also a 4am-type Cole Porter arrangement where you can see the mist swirling off the streets The group showcases some of the best young British jazz musicians, and the sound is unmistakably British — British-Jewish, that is

CLIVE BELL

Sonic Youth
Washing Machine
GEFFEN GED 24B25 CD/MC

On 1987's *Sister* Sonic Youth sounded like they meant what they were saying, like it was exciting, like they believed it. For all their arty experimentalist cred, Sonic Youth were masters of grafting hooks onto their almost impenetrable feedback morass — they were pop stars On *Washing Machine*, however, Kim Gordon appears jaded, Lee Ranaldo sings like he's tired and Thurston Moore sounds like he just doesn't give a fuck and wants to sit at home and jam along to his Marion Brown albums

They've always taken their ideas from

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■ Applications are invited from large-scale jazz groups who wish to undertake a tour of England. Large-scale bands are considered to be those with 7 to 12 members or more. Grants awarded are typically in the region of £4,000 – £8,000, the exact amount depending on the size of the group and the tour itinerary. This scheme is for projects falling between the 1 April 1996 and 31st March 1997.

■ For an application form, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Rajan Hooper – Music Officer, Music Department, Arts Council of England, 14 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 3NQ.

■ Closing Date : Friday 26 January 1996 – 5pm

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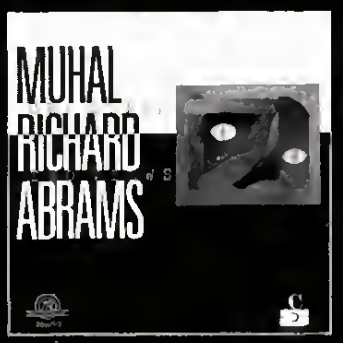
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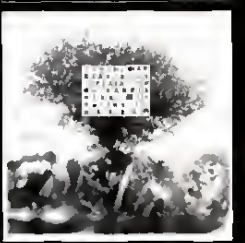
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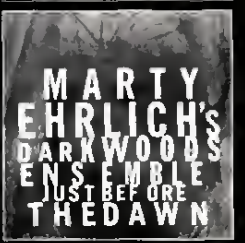
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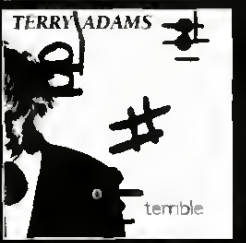
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schlock — just like The Cramps, only highbrow. Here, they wed their Larry Clark-style exploitation of fucked up adolescence as revolutionary statement, low-grade Patti Smith-isms and psychotic-sexuality-as-art mannerisms with girl group pathos/bathos ("Trouble Girl", a duet with The Breeders' Kim Deal) and white boy blues posturing ("No Queen Blues").

With the exception of the spectacularly over-indulgent "The Diamond Sea", a 19 minute epic of bad poetry and banal guitar noodling, the guitars are in full force. Not unlike Television, Sonic Youth's guitar interplay can redeem almost anything. When they get going, it is an awesome sound. On the title track, Ranaldo and Moore trade more extreme "Sister Ray" feedback licks while Gordon's bass rumbles underneath with the slow bounce of The Modern Lovers' "Pablo Picasso".

On the whole, though, *Washing Machine* is little more than a consolidation of their turf. As on their previous disc, *Experimental Jet Set* , their deadpan attitudes get the better of them. It is the kind of dull thud of an album that great artists put out signalling their decline and the exhaustion of an idea.

PETER SHAPIRO

Suns Of Arqa
Shabda
ARKA SOUND 2109 CD

Suns Of Arqa
Total Eclipse Of The Suns
ARKA SOUND 2108 CD

Active since 1979, and with a total of 15 LP releases to their credit, Suns Of Arqa are a fitting example of maverick determination in the face of mass-media indifference. These two new releases suggest in part why this has been so, but also how the Manchester-based collective could reach greater numbers.

Shabda could be located somewhere between the New Age, global and Ambient spheres, yet thanks to a defiance of New Age vacuousness, folkloric authenticism and Ambient rigour, SOA explore a different area. Although they are a likely inspiration for the Nation Records ethos, they reject any temptation to use music as an aggressive weapon. Jah Wobble's sonic perambulations are more closely related. Though painted from a less varied palette than Wobble's, the Suns never fail to create luminous textures. That these, once established, prove remarkably stubborn at avoiding development; and that the lyrical content should be so insistently comforting — eg an endless mantra of *"There is no danger here"* — as to sound like paranoia, are the downsides of what is an original but flawed collection.

Total Eclipse Of The Suns is less individual, but perhaps more globally satisfying. Claiming to gather remixed material from 1979 to 1995, although the oldest original seems to date from 1990, the CD still sounds extremely contemporary. Ranging from a handful of elegant dubby experiments to a more dancefloor-orientated feel on United Spirits Of Rhythm's "Govinda's Dream" or Swordfish's "Sully's Reel", the tracks manage to display variety and continuity at the same time. The modernist preoccupation with what is raw musical material, and what is a complete, unimprovable work, is fully on display here.

SYLVESTRE BALAZARD

John Surman
A Biography Of The Rev Absalom Dawe
ECM 523 749 CD

It's possible to trace a line between this, John Surman's fifth solo album for ECM, and those that have preceded it. The somewhat enigmatic title is a reference to the saxophonist's great-great grandfather, a bootmaker who lived in Dorset between 1850 and 1890 and who was rumoured to have been the inspiration for a character in Thomas Hardy's *Under The Greenwood Tree*. Rumour or fact, Hardy has long been a source of inspiration for Surman — witness "Tess" from last year's *Stranger Than Fiction* — and such knowledge of his ancestor must have proved irresistible when this album began to form in his head. Such a source of inspiration also follows on logically from *The Road To St Ives* and *The Amazing Adventures Of Simon Simon*, which draw upon a particularly English rural/mythical tradition.

One distinct difference between this and his earlier work, however, is the dearth of multi-tracking. Earlier recordings were noted as much for technological sleight of hand as for saxophone dexterity. These days, there's more emphasis on the latter. That's not to devalue the contribution of the keyboards. Just as an artist prepares his canvas with oils, so Surman builds his backdrops with simple synth textures. Most times, they seem hardly there: a mere aural surface on which to paint in sound. At certain times, they drop out altogether, the sax standing alone in graceful clarity.

And what grace. Surman himself views the progress of his solo work as a honing down to the bare fact of his voice on the instrument, but that seems too simplistic a view. Of course, he's a supremely lyrical player, but then so is Jan Garbarek, perhaps the most obvious point of comparison within the ECM stable. Where Surman truly comes into his own is in the construction of his compositions. His work is built not so much upon layers of sound as strands, interweaving around one another. Although this makes for work of quite beguiling complexity — the way the soprano sax swoops in and out of the baritone section in "Druid's Circle" is mesmerising — this is tempered by the sheer emotive power of Surman's playing. He plays very much from the heart, not the mind. And his is a contented spirit.

PETER McINTYRE

Unmen
Music In Motion
VINYL JAPAN LEBCD34 CD

Unmen mix up field recordings with programmed grooves, guitar, piano, brass — anything that sounds right. This approach is not so strange, considering that leader Giles Perring is an active member of Echo City — pragmatists extraordinaire — who construct instruments from materials available at any well-stocked builder's merchants. Both he and the other half of the duo, Nick Cash, also featured in Fad Gadget. What comes out is an all-systems-open approach which is neither overtly high nor low-tech, but rather, alternative tech.

Music In Motion opens with "Brief Encounter", which encapsulates their eclectic approach. The track consists of a female British Rail announcer sampled at York Station — her melodic cadences state a theme of sorts, with the cavernous ambience of the building acting as a soundbox. This is chopped up and melded with locomotive whistles and clattering wheels on tracks, rhythmically duplicated by drums recorded in a disused railway tunnel in London.

The programmed grooves that open "Also With Me" metamorphose through Techno/Jazz/funk hybrids to full blooded percussion patterns. Future Sound Of London tried this type of mix of real and sampled instruments on their recent 'live' album *ISDN*, but this is far more visceral. The Doppler effect is showcased on "The Swarm" — varispeed, multi-tracked recordings made on a bridge over a motorway. Their sonic voyaging reaches its apogee on the funky "The Honey Siege", as the duo travel from swirling white noise through electric piano, slide guitar and Can-like rhythms with dubwise effects. *Music In Motion* closes with a sombre, Glass-like chorale complete with drum rolls and depth-charge bass notes. Unmen are out on their own — they investigate, create, dazzle and do their best to defy description.

MIKE BARNES

The Velvet Underground
Peel Slowly And See
CHRONICLES/POLYDOR/A&M 31452 7887 5CD

This box set collects The velvet Underground's four studio LPs. *The Velvet Underground & Nico Produced By Andy Warhol* (ie the banana cover), *White Light/White Heat* (noisy, post-Nico), *The Velvet Underground* (quiet, post-Cale here in its original 'closet' mix), and *Looded* (the 'straight rock' LP, with the ludicrous Doug Yule moving to the fore, as everyone else gets tired). With these come a variety of demos, including a whole CD's worth recorded before they coalesced as a group (four versions of "Heroin", an exhausting nine of "All Tomorrow's Parties"), and a handful of previously unreleased live workouts, including the remarkable "Melody Laughter". This last is a ten minute slab of free exploration, a sound sculpture in pure electricity, verging on AMM territory: thus, too out even for the second LP, but a sure sign of one of the things they were pitching for in those years. Between this and

harmonia mundi



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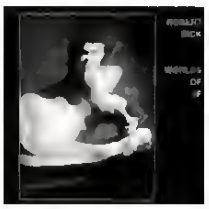
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CD LR 225 MICHAEL JEFRY STEVENS/ MARK FELDMAN
HAIKU
This duo collaboration by two of the brightest talents of the New York scene is an outgrowth of their musical association for the past eight years Ten compositions of the CD explore both improvised and composed dialogue between violin and piano emphasising the emotional and musical rapport between these two musicians However there was no editing done to any of the tracks What you hear is what was performed in the studio each player contributing five compositions Total duration is 62 26 Liner notes by Michael Stevens



CD LR 226 JOE MORRIS
NO VERTIGO
A solo CD by a Bostonian guitarist "who is perhaps the most exciting and original jazz plucker to emerge in the last decade" (Down Beat) Joe Morris plays acoustic guitar mandolin electric guitar and banjouke He says "My goal is to make unique music that will surprise you while remaining open to interpretations " The clarity of his playing is reflected in his liner notes on his aesthetics and methods of playing This CD is destined to become a manual for generations of guitar players young and old Total duration 76 24



CD LR 227 TIBOR SZEMZO
TRACTATUS
A new work by Tibor Szemzo took six months of hard work in the studio to produce yet it is only 30 minutes and 30 seconds long We dared to put it on the CD because it is a masterpiece Anything else next to this composition inspired by the writings of one the greatest minds on this planet ("Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus" by Ludwig Wittgenstein) would be counter-productive We are releasing this CD with profound sadness for it is obvious to us that Tibor Szemzo will be whisked away by a major record company Well he thoroughly deserves it



CD LR 228/229 ABRAHAM ADZINYAH/ ANTHONY BRAXTON
OUO (WESLEYAN) 1994
A double CD documenting a complete concert at Wesleyan University in front of an appreciative audience A 100-minute dialogue between a master percussionist and an amazing saxophonist who plays his whole arsenal of saxophones and clarinet Sit and watch how ideas are being born developed and brought to a close just to start it all over again Each section of this fascinating dialogue could become a saperate composition or a CD but this a beauty of improvisation



CD LR 230 SUN RA & HIS INTERGALACTIC ARKESTRA
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the early demos — which involve John Cale and Lou Reed alone, and are pristine in their folky simplicity ("Venus In Furs" originally resembled Simon And Garfunkel's "Scarborough Fair") — the stuff that got onto the official records reveals the degree to which this sound was consciously evolved, to which the technologies of fuzz and distortion (and eccentric sound layering) were applied with deliberation, and combined with LaMonte Young's Fluxus ideas about repetition as an expressive force, and Ornette Coleman's about directness and simplicity, and — perhaps — about the ubiquitous blue note and pure melody

You don't have to know any of this to warm to them, of course this is not theory-led music (a sign that they'd studied their teachers well) You can lose yourself in specific moments instead the circling bass figure on "European Son To Delmore Schwartz", the scribbling viola on "Black Angel's Death Song", the first rude intrusions of Reed's voice in "Lady Godiva's Operation" (at the point in the story where woozily romanticised love-blather switches to Burroughsian surgery-nightmare), Reed's unmistakeable crabbed and bent little guitar solos, Moe Tucker's drumming anywhere, Moe Tucker's singing anywhere, the way Nico's singing (if you can stand it) more than anything expresses her never being in on the joke, the legendary shift from A chord to E in "Sweet Jane" (in which can be found much early Eno)

Nor do you have to carry a satchel full of textbooks to respond to more generalised pleasures Reed's gentleness as a writer (considering he's so famously nasty a man) towards the idiosyncracies of those he observes from without and sings from within, the way he fast-strums certain guitar melody lines — a bit like the way the mandolin's played — as a correlative of Cale's viola drones (a Reed innovation that gives the group rhythm that evolves out of it a kind of plastic, chewy looseness, a function of the limits of the speed at which he can wield the pick), the way Cale and Sterling Morrison toy with the limits of the out-of-tune backing singer, the way the surges of (deliberately) inadequately controlled power cause the sound to bloat or teeter in the more







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Vinyl Japan: through Vital

X-Talk: through New Note

intensely electric songs, the loose Frankensteinian corraling of fragments of different kinds of musical substance far more Velvets songs than just "The Murder Mystery" are recorded to sound like two or more songs unspooling in parallel (hi Ornette!)

Reed's *Metal Machine Music* — that thick wedge of unremitting systems-induced feedback, four sides of endlessly dancing upper partials (which digital mastering ruins, incidentally) — was first released, in 1975, on RCA's Red Seal label, as if it were 'classical' music Reed claimed to critic Lester Bangs in 1976 that it held up well against the likes of LaMonte Young and Xenakis, "in fact is far better" Many wrongly assumed that claim to be part of a continuing vicious arrogant prank at the expense of his fans (they underestimate how totally those who passed through the New York cauldron of revaluation absorbed art's 60s upside-downing, and cannot not think in its terms) Perhaps we have to face up to the fact that Young's and Cage's truest, most daring heirs are the late 70s No Wave and the 80s guitar-clang armies (Sonic Youth and Band Of Susans especially) repetitive, dimensional electric sound vectored through "Sister Ray" and *MMM* If so, better them than the increasingly bland and defanged orchestral minimalists If there's a loss — a need to consolidate, a pressure to survive in a market-bound world — there are now also several decades of practical wisdom on how to force a space for strangeness, simplicity and generosity also The Velvets staked out so broad a ground — encompassing good ideas and bad, serious and trivial — that the reach of their influence has become hard to discern the perils of the world they instituted are so vast that many actually in it spend more time in denial than not

MARK SINKER

in brief **electronica**

Rob Young boots up his hard drive and clicks into a new folder of weird electronic files

DSL I LOVE You! MEGO 005 12" **Fennesz Instrument** MEGO 004 PROMO 12" **Sluta Leta Fan-Club** MEGO 006 PROMO 12" Vienna's Mego label do to Techno and Ambient what the architect Hundertwasser did to the grand, gridded buildings of Vienna they draw misleading forms and patterns around familiar structures with a wayward style that's perversely comforting DSL take a lovers rock tune and turn it into a screeching eagle cry, "Coming With The Sound" puts the old Funky Drummer under the interrogation lamp of chordal uppercut jabs Fennesz, formerly a guitarist, runs multiple guitar drones through a Singer sewing machine, segmenting it with rapid scythe motions, the flipside suggests an impossible meeting of Eno and Keith Rowe Sluta Leta are a Swedish duo who spend half the year repairing scooters in Corfu (Mego — it's *that* kind of label) "Whispers Special"'s ordinary funk is no preparation for the squelching, twittering constructions on the B side As with the first three Mego 12"s, well worth shaking a stick at, if you can find them

Gescom The Sounds Of Machines Our Parents Used EP CLEAR CLR 408 12" **Gregory Fleckner Quintet Monkey Boots** CLEAR CLR 419 CD/2LP Autechre are about the only musicians who can work effectively in the cold zone that doesn't allow any furring of the substance by breakbeat samples, funky TripHop claddings or other triangulation points of reference Recording for Clear as Gescom, they turn in three grooves spun from nanoplastics, evidently recorded in a different timezone from their rasping epic *In Repetae* LP on Warp Gregory Watts and Mark Fleckner follow Jimi Tenor in trying to stuff one musical form into another Their self-styled 'nouveau electronic jazz' celebrates the early unsweetened acoustic bop of The Jazz Messengers, Jimmy Giuffre and Bill Evans, the restrained mood earnestly translated into a tabletop of cheap drum machines and sound modules Occasionally it works, other times it's undernourished Someone please lend them some Albert Ayler records

International People's Gang Em:t 3395 EMT 3395 CD IPG's headphone voyage begins with an orchestra tuning up, then segues into a succession of disembodied voices that

ripple as if the surface of the sound has been stirred up with a stick This is 70 minutes plus of complex sonic storytelling that never quite lets you in on its secret, fully justifying (for once) the term 'organic', despite the Em t studio lustre (the label has its own sound as distinctive as ECM's Rainbow Studio productions) The record's endlessly reconfiguring tableaux aren't attention grabbers, but soak the consciousness like a spreading blot Like the best food for thought, this meal demands your time

Microstoria Init Ding MILLE PLATEAUX MPCD 17 CD Both Mouse On Mars and Oval own the lease on some of the most individual sounds in Europe right now, so any collaboration between the two is bound to sound *doppel*-out there With *Init Ding*, Jan St Werner and Markus Popp have managed to make *intrusive* Ambient Much sounds like scraps from the editing-room floor and the hoover that sucks up the scurf, what's compelling is the chance to hear the human manipulations in these gurgling electronic haikus as microscopically detailed as a Company improvisation 'Natural' stereo becomes a joke, dropouts are suddenly part of ordinary dynamics Neither hi- nor lo- just fi

Jonah Sharp/Plaid/Mark Broom South Of Market EP REFLECTIVE REF 011 12" Recorded under less than ideal circumstances at an Ambient pow-wow in San Francisco, these three tracks seethe along with petulant rhythms towards uncertain conclusions The happy machine sounds of Detroit reach the West Coast and falter uncertainly at the sea's edge

Various Artists Electric Ladyland MILLE PLATEAUX EFA 00669 CD *Scharf* collection of salty Mille Plateaux overstock tracks, compiled with little obvious logic, they add up to an adventurous, bruising orbit Pulled by a gravitational weight towards out electric jazz (Gas's "Maschine" kicks some beats over Miles's "He Loved Him Madly", or something that sounds very like it), *Electric Ladyland*'s approach is from the opposite end to the route taken by Mo' Wax (ie it acts as if Acid Jazz never happened)

in brief **outer limits**

Clive Bell encounters some ethnic confusion, exotic allusions and Industrial confusions

Auntie Horror Film Now I See It All DOR INFINITY ADOR 797 CD These are sonic embroideries — instrumentals created by stitching loops, samples and beats into a musical quilt The loops are often dark and gritty, but offset by upbeat drum patterns Here a snatch of Arab string orchestra, there a pinch of Indian vocalist, plus the occasional cinema voice saying, *"You understand nothing"*, or a cockney swearing into his pint The results are menacing and theatrical, a kind of English mystery kitsch that fits well with the name Auntie Horror Film (a pseudonym for a renegade member of Trans-Global Underground) "Roger's Chicken" sounds like a hyperactive Robert Wyatt, an organ meandering sadly over odd grinding rhythms and asthmatic breathing Then there are four dance mixes, where the album gets to kick its shoes off and romp on the rug Something like Trans-Global Underground itself, but less extrovert and with lighter drums

Allan Bryant Space Guitars COMPOSERS RECORDINGS CRI 699 CD Now in his 60s, Allan Bryant belonged to Musica Elettronica Viva, one of the first electronic improvisation groups (Frederic Rzewski and Alvin Curran were also members) This is an expanded reissue of Bryant's late 70s solo album, on which he improvises on self-made "Cheshire-cat-guitars — all that's left of normal guitars are smiling strings with a magnetic-mic tooth or two" Bryant relates his music to physics and astronomy, seeing his bouncing sprays of notes as particles whirling through the ether I can hear echoes of Fred Frith's first *Guitar Solos* album, but Bryant's ability to inject colour and drama into his work falls well short of Frith's The sounds themselves lack character or ambiguity, and I'm afraid I found the whole thing a bit of a dither

Allison Cameron Raw Sangudo EXPERIMENTAL INTERMEDIA XI 112 CD Allison Cameron is a young Canadian



composer who studied with Louis Andriessen in Amsterdam More mysterious than Andriessen, warmer than Morton Feldman, she has something in common with both, exploring a narrow range of usually quiet, repetitive material The five pieces here are played with great delicacy and skill by a variety of chamber ensembles, from an 11 piece group with three electric guitars to a baroque quartet playing "Gibbous Moon" — this skeletal, disturbing item sounds like Purcell undergoing psychoanalysis For "Runa", bassoon and baritone sax in their highest registers hang suspended alongside electric piano to create an almost Javanese poise and stillness Spooky and very rewarding

JA Deane Nomad VICTO 035 CD In between playing trombone with Tina Turner, percussion with Jon Hassell and electronics with Butch Morris, JA Deane has assembled a large body of his own music together with his partner, choreographer Colleen Mulvihill The seven pieces here result from this collaboration Flutes and pedal steel guitars are worked in with Deane's sampling and electronics to create a shifting landscape of troubled textures and melancholy moods The scale is large for a solo album, almost cinematic at times A slight blandness creeps in occasionally, but the music is organised with intelligence and I like its unpredictability

Kim Dae Hwan Moogu ISCD 331/332 2CD The first of Korean percussionist Kim Dae Hwan's two CDs contains nine improvisations on a small number of traditional drums, rototoms and cymbals Owing almost nothing to jazz drumming, Kim patiently explores a limited range of sounds, feeling his way towards a very personal style in harmony with natural sounds like rainfall He almost maintains a pulse, but not quite Another of Kim's skills is miniature engraving, and he has engraved a 283 character sutra on a single rice grain He says he recites the same sutra while playing, "in order to forget the beat" The other thing Kim does is ride a 1340cc 91 style 'Fatboy' Harley Davidson motorbike On the second CD we hear him rev up the Harley and play along with the puttering exhaust. This duet works just fine, and it's extraordinary how compatible Kim's playing is with the irregular sounds of his bike Next month Han Bennink in duo with a fork-lift truck?

In Slaughter Natives Purgate My Stain STAALPLAAT ST 030 CD It's not all doom and gloom for Swedish painter Jouni Havukainen, alias In Slaughter Natives Monks chant *"Christe eleison"* over ominous drones and distant machine gun fire Enormous drums thump out an accompaniment to scary muttering voices and creepy piano lines If you spent your schooldays being terrified by Jesuits, don't bother to buy this, you can probably hear it already inside your head Having friends round for an exorcism? This is the perfect soundtrack I love some of the titles "Clean Cathedral", "Burn My Rest", but I was so scared I couldn't listen till the end On second thoughts, it *is* all doom and gloom

London Labyrinth Earth Star SEVEN TWENTY-THREE 723 01 CD A windy blast of shakuhachi sampling, dingly-dongly percussion, and we're off on a Middle Eastern chant over a crumbling rhythm — no, it's not Loop Guru, it's "Scarlet Liaison", a track on the new 'multicultural' album from Glyn Wilcox's London Labyrinth It's arguable that the music itself is a cul-de-sac, that the global jam session inside Wilcox's sampler is just the result of a passing fashion in technology But I would like the result far more if it was better done — the rhythms are clumsily programmed, the keyboard sounds are clanky, and the exploitation of ethnic sources unimaginative However, there are signs that Wilcox could write a decent pop song if he kicked this ethnic habit

The Oblivion Ensemble Nightmare SinistrotorsE COMPLACENCY CP 9502 CD If you only buy one album of New York visionary Gothic psychedelia this year, make sure it's this one When it comes to Edgar Allan Poe rock, when it comes to lyrics like *"Try as I will, you die grotesquely under lime green moonlight rays"*, the Oblivions are a class act. John Bergstrom and Brannon Hungness are in charge Hungness is a member of Glenn Branca's ensemble, though I'm sure I saw his name in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* They're very fond of a rushing crescendo of electronic noise that hurls you forward into the next section The slow, druggy songs and mumbled vocals recall Spiritualized, but with added nightmarish electronic landscapes Very enjoyable, actually

Samarai Celestial Isis Sun CARROT TOP SAKI 009 CD From 1979, Samarai Celestial was drummer with the Sun Ra Intergalactic Cosmo Love Adventure Arkestra, and this is his first solo recording Strangely, there's hardly any live drumming, Celestial prefers to scat and chat over a collection of drum machines and space synths. I found the pieces overlong (average length 14 minutes), and the wooden flute playing is intolerable But by the time the drum machines are tumbling headlong over each other's heels on "Unifying Rhythm", and Celestial is enquiring *"How funky is your funk?"*, I have to admit he is creating something very unusual, with an infectiously exuberant fizz, and his talk about healing the planet is starting to make a stoned sense

Various Artists The Exotic Trilogy Vol 1 KBZ 200 KBZ 200 CD Aloha! Easy Listening fans — grab that skin-tight, orange nylon polo-neck and pop on that coconut-shell bra, because this is the real thing There are only three tunes on this album, but in accordance with the KBZ 2DD label's principle of 'Irritainment In Sound', each one is performed in seven different versions by artists from the 50s and 60s The tunes are "Quiet Village", the one with howling animal noises on the intro, "Taboo", a descent into vibes and bongos hell, and "Caravan", in which camels poo on your living room carpet The performances are charmingly thin, featuring hilarious organs, barely functioning electric sitars, and skinny string sections failing to achieve a glossy sheen All are brief, too, with Dick Hyman's scamper through "Caravan" a particularly laconic 2'19" Indispensable, in a casual way

Various Artists Soundscape Amsterdam STAALPLAAT SSC 001 CD An interesting project — 11 young composers, three of them women, produce brand new sound collages, mainly composed of material recorded in the streets of Amsterdam Cocks crow and geese honk, sandwiched between barrel-organs, bicycle bells and street cries Tram drivers ring their bells at the 'recordist' with the mic and portable DAT, warning him or her to get off the tracks This is a lively record, but the material seems hard to organise convincingly, and several pieces feature the same old trams and barrel-organs thrown together almost arbitrarily However, Dyane Donck creates an intriguing bridge between internal and external sound, so that you could be splashing about inside the womb or in the canal, if you follow me

Peter Vermeersch The Soluble Fish WALPURGIS WPR 006 CD With one foot in the concert hall and the other in cabaret, this is a song cycle from a music-theatre piece premiered in Antwerp last year The Flemish lyrics by Josse De Pauw display a Gunter Grass-type interest in varieties of maggot and eel The Walpurgis six-piece ensemble accompanies two singers on clarinets, piano and strings Vermeersch's writing, while providing occasional moments of runaway cabaret merriment, is frankly hard work, coming as it does from a conservatoire tradition of vocal composition that I have no sympathy with In fact I may as well confess I hate most of what is called music-theatre If you feel differently, this is a classy example of its type

in brief **out rock**

Tom Ridge immerses himself in the post-rock soundbath

After The Flood After The Flood AETERNA NO NUMBER CD **Lanterna Lanterna** PARASOL 013 CD Distinctly old school ambience and moody atmospherics from a collective and individual approach respectively Seattle-based After The Flood showcase recordings made between 1989 and 1994 with a shifting cast of musicians There are plenty of haunting instrumentals and fragile acoustic ballads with folk leanings, employing electronic

new notes at a glance

information from SPNM

november

new notes, the monthly listings brochure published by SPNM, is an essential guide to what and who's happening in new music, specialising in the composed music circuit. Events listed in full in **new** notes also appear in these pages - we're sure you'll want to sample what's on offer!
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1 Parnassus Ensemble of London Kerger*** Mullenbach**, Vaughan Williams, Tippett *CMS*

1-10 Oxford Contemporary Music Festival Birtwistle, Finnnissy, Nono, Xenakis, Tippett, Skempton, Cashian, Scelsi, Barry etc *Oxford 01865 261384*

2 New Macnaghten presents Opus 20 Purcell/Matthews, Stravinsky, Purcell/Swayne, Newland*** Maw, Britten *St James's Church, Piccadilly, London SW1 0171 437 5053*

3 Lowbury Piano Trio Sibelius*, Taylor* *WH*

BBC Scottish SO 'Cutting Edge' Bryars*** *Tramway, Albert Drive, Glasgow 0141 227 5511*

3-5 Nicholas Maw 60th Birthday Weekend Maw etc. *Malvern WR14 01684 892277*

4 Routes of Tradition: Folk traditions in Song Copland, Montsalvatge etc *Sutton House, Homerton High Street, London E9 0181 986 2264*

Dullemajik trad Luxembourg folk music *CMS*

Brunel Ensemble Stravinsky, Burrell, Elgar, Williamson *St George's, Brandon Hill, Bristol 0117 923 0359*

5 Sound International Cabrer, Ker, Lorraine, Akane, Campling, Koh *ICA, The Mall, London SW1 0171 930 3647*

London Sinfonietta: Webern: The Master Alchemist Webern, Saxton, Bainbridge*** *QEH RFH2*

6 London Musici Henze, Gorb, Barber, Nyman *The Grand, Clapham Junction, London SW11 0181 871 7037*

7 New Music from South Africa Maraire**, Kosviner**, Meyer**, Blake*, Volans etc *JSS*

Kammer Musèk Veräin Lëtzebeurg Lenners**, Reuter**, Wengler**, Fenigstein**, Purcell *CMS*

Psappha Stravinsky, Butler, Musgrave, Poole *Sema Group Concert Hall, RNCM, Manchester M13 0161 273 4504 or 5534*

7 Philip Mayer, piano** Lynch Mitchell*** *Berlin*

7-10 Trinity College of Music Monteverdi Festival Beno/Monteverdi, Goehr, Maderna *Rudolf Steiner Theatre, 35 Park Road, NW1 0171 935 5773 x 232*

9 Apartment House Cage**, Schnebel**, Huber**, Dench*** Ichiyanagi, Wolff** *St Cyprian's Church, Glentworth Street, London NW1 0171 794 7921 / 0181 948 6615*

BBC Symphony Orchestra Britten, Nyman*** Elgar *RFH1*

Academy of St Martin in the Fields Mozart, Pudlak*** Rodrigo, Mendelssohn *QEH RFH2*

10 London Sinfonietta: Endgames Nono**, Feldman** *QEH RFH2*

New London Orchestra Delius, Milner, Wengler**, Vaughan Williams *CMS*

10,11 CBSO 75th Anniversary Concerts Adams*** Knussen*** Vaughan Williams, Matthews etc *SH*

11 Nouveau Quatuor de Saxophones de Luxembourg Kraus, Jacob, Krumlovsky, Hemmer, Lenners *CMS*

Solent Sounds Connolly, Pilott, Whitty, McBirnie, Howard, Penn-Evans, Newland, Treasure, Finnissy *Portsmouth Grammar School, High Street, Portsmouth 01705 830995*

Carol Lian, piano Tucker, Reilly etc *JSS*

George Russell Russell, new works** *QEH RFH2*

12 Remembrance Sunday service Howells, Corp*** *CMS*

13 Piano Circus Wolfe, Palmer, Metcalf*** Gardner, Pärt, Fitkin *QEH RFH2*

***14-15 SPNM Education Launch** Chelsfield Room, RFH *0171 828 9696*

14 Colchester New Music Parsons, Ellis*** Lutyens, Larkum*** Hudes*** *BMIC*

Béatrice Rauchs Lenners, Mullenbach, Merzig, Krüger, Field *CMS*

City of London Chamber Orchestra Copland, Martin, Pheloung*, Stravinsky *JSS*

14-30 RCM Fast Forward Festival Martland, Harvey, Birtwistle, Bruce, Bainbridge, Tumage etc. *RCM*

15 BBC Symphony Orchestra Webern, Mahler, Tchaikovsky *RFH1*

15-19 International Hindemith Viola Festival Beamish*** Horne*** Nyman*** B A Zimmermann, Takemitsu**, Kurtág etc *WH*

15-26 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival Nono, Rihm, Dillon, Lachenmann etc *Huddersfield 01484 430528*

16 Cambridge New Music Players Lenners**, Tumage**, Jack*** Ferguson, Holloway *CMS*

Psappha Nicolson, Maxwell Davies*** *Sema Group Concert Hall, RNCM, Manchester M13 0161 273 4504 or 5534*

17 Barbara Thompson, BBC Singers, Medici String Quartet Thompson, Weill arr by Thompson, Guy, Dankworth, Burgon, Westbrook, etc *QEH RFH2*

18 London Sinfonietta: The Composer Conducts II: George Benjamin Carter*, Messiaen, Grisey**, Benjamin** *QEH RFH2*

19 The Ionian Singers Salter*** Musgrave*** Jackson*** *JSS*

20 Perspectives Ensemble Lara, Halffter *Great Hall, King's College, The Strand, London WC2 0171 873 2029*

20 SPNM Steel Pan Day:** Flynn Trunk*** Watson*** Livingstone*** McGarr*** *Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival 01484 430528*

22 London Philharmonic Road Beyond Series Messiaen *RFH1*

London Mozart Players Takemitsu etc. *Fairfield Hall, Park Lane, Croydon CR9 0181 688 9291*

24 English Chamber Orchestra Stravinsky, Bryars*** etc *BH*

Bingham String Quartet Haydn, Allan*** Janacek, Crumb *The Chapel, Mill Hill School, The Ridgeway, London NW7 0181 959 1221*

25 Routes of Tradition: Looking East Bodman*** Mayer, Hovhaness *Sutton House, 2-4 Homerton High Street, Hackney, London E9 0181 986 2264*

Philharmonia Orchestra Holloway *RFH1*

26 London Philharmonic Road Beyond Series Britten *RFH1*

27 Ian Pace Holliger, Zimmermann, Kagel, Schnebel**, Stockhausen etc *Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 0181 948 6615*

London Sinfonietta Webern, Lutoslawski, Salonen**, Zimmermann *RFH2*

28 Linda Merrick, Benjamin Frith McLeod*, Thorpe*** Ellerby, A Anderson*** *London College of Music at TVU, Vestry Hall, Ranelagh Rd, Ealing, London W5 0181 231 2337*

Eric Hudes 75th Birthday Concert Hudes*** Parsons*** etc *BMIC*

Braxton at 50: Ensemble Exposé Braxton, Barrett, Redgate, Ferneyhough, Xenakis *St Giles' Cripplegate, Barbican Centre, London EC2 0181 671 9771*

CBSO Haydn, Schnittke**, Tchaikovsky *SH*

29 Continuum Ensemble Dallapiccola, Scelsi, Busoni, Ravel, Timossi*** *Regent Hall, 275 Oxford Street, London W1 01395 276196*

30 Ensemble Corrente Knussen, Stringer*, Knotts*** Watkins*** Beamish* *St Cyprian's Church, Glentworth Street, London NW1 0181 659 4223*

KEY:

***4** SPNM event
*** World Première
** UK Première
* London Première

BH. Barbican Hall, Silk Street, EC2, 0171 638 8891
BMIC: British Music Information Centre, 0171 499 8567
CMS: Clerkenwell Music Series 1995, The Church of Our Most Holy Redeemer, Exmouth Market, Clerkenwell, London EC1, 0181 422 3119
JSS. St John's Smith Square, SW1 0171 222 1061
PR RFH3; QEH RFH2; RFH1: South Bank Centre, 0171 960 4242
SH. Symphony Hall, Broad Street, Birmingham B3, 0121 212 3333
WH. Wigmore Hall, W1, 0171 935 2141

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Ornette Coleman — Tone Dialing

Ornette Coleman's first album for seven years is a superb return to form. With a seven-piece Prime Time outfit that includes his son Denardo Coleman (drums), Badal Roy (tablas), Chris Rosenberg (guitar) and Al MacDowell (bass), the free jazz pioneer dials up 16 new tracks which pulse with invention, expressiveness and instinct. From the devious deconstruction of "Bach Prelude" to the kaleidoscopic funk of "Tone Dialing", this is destined to be a classic Coleman album. Also includes a 90s take on old favourite "Kathelin Gray". This offer is bound to be popular complete the form now to avoid disappointment! ***The Wire*. Prime tones, prime pulses.**

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programming and more traditional instruments (violin, clarinet) It is perhaps a bit too tastefully solemn for its own good, frequently recalling This Mortal Coil, but without enough moments of intensity to add colour to its more pallid, sedentary arrangements *Lanterna* is the work of guitarist Henry Frayne, accompanied by drummer Brendan Gamble It's a largely instrumental exploration of varying guitar textures, brought together to form a kind of imaginary soundtrack. Frayne is clearly the master of a variety of techniques, in both chiming reverberation and disembodied ambient sounds There's nothing that's strikingly original here, but it forms a coherent whole and is sufficiently varied to be both interesting and involving, particularly during the more experimental second half

The Denison/Kimball Trio Soul Machine SKIN GRAFT GR22 CD/LP
Don Caballero Don Caballero II TOUCH AND GO TG14 CD/LP Jazz-inspired experimentalism is making serious inroads into the US guitar underground, though with The Denison/Kimball Trio the approach becomes more a straightforward appropriation of modern and post-bop jazz styles *Soul Machine* sounds accomplished enough, taking in charged, frenetic workouts ("Blueball Avenue", "Framed") and more moody, reflective pieces ("Ad Infinitum", "Passing Blue"), the creative core of Duane Denison's guitar and James Kimball's drums is versatile, but the music seems to lack some vital spark. Pittsburgh quartet Don Caballero manage to have their cake and eat it with a combination of improvisational fluidity and hardcore muscle *Don Caballero II* is a collection of busy instrumentals, with shifting time signatures and dynamics Often the music is anchored by guitar riffs while the drums clatter about freestyle drummer Damon Che could almost be an Art Blakey for the post-rock generation Don Caballero never lose the plot amid these often ferocious grooves

The Flaming Lips Clouds Taste Metallic WARNER BROS 9362 45911 CD/LP A further blast of distorted bubblegum from the spiritual forebears of Mercury Rev, with a similar line in whiny vocals and all-round eccentricity Somewhere a machine whirrs away, acoustic guitars drop in and out of the mix and the drums clatter noisily From this melange of sounds, a kind of skewed pomposity emerges ("The Abandoned Hospital Ship") and The Flaming Lips hit their stride Occasionally, you feel the weird and wacky angle is being overplayed, with song titles such as "Psychiatric Explorations Of The Fetus With Needles" and "Placebo Headwound", but there's an enormous amount of drive which tends to anchor the more wayward elements to what is, in essence, classic guitar pop, played blisteringly loud

Flies Inside The Sun An Audience Of Others (Including Herself) KRANKY KRANK DD8 CD/LP
Thela Thela ECSTATIC PEACE 53 CD Two New Zealand groups exploring the outer limits of improvisational and drone-based rock. Flies Inside The Sun produce music with gaping holes, areas of blankness punctuated by sudden, jarring noise and eerie vocal intonations "Icarus" has a bowed guitar and rumbling bass combination with sudden upsurges of volume, cacophonous waves crashing and just as abruptly subsiding, "Sleepwalk" travels from noise-drone intensity towards ethereal balladry before descending once more into chaos This music pushes the envelope even by Kranky's standards Thela are not dissimilar, though their approach sounds far less planned, as brittle, scratchy guitars etch out a jagged groove You can hear the musicians finding their way into, and out of, each piece But there's not a great deal of momentum more a tentative advance Because of this, it's no easy listen

The Magnetic Fields The Charm Of The Highway Strip SETANTA SET021 CD Left of centre Electro-pop from songwriter, producer and instrumentalist Stephen Merrit These are largely keyboard-based songs, primitive Electronica with a very human interface This, the fourth Magnetic Fields album, consists primarily of alternative road songs and Country-flavoured musings, delivered in Merrit's hoarse, melodious voice This is offbeat Americana, deeply addictive to listen to

New Wet Kojak New Wet Kojak TOUCH AND GO TG144 CD/LP Remember when sleaze was a lifestyle option for underground rock stars and their acolytes, as opposed to a media label for political scandal? Outlaws on the fringe of 'the American Lounge Music scene' (apparently), New Wet Kojak immerse themselves in the twilight zone of simmering passion and subterranean desire This debut is a thick stew of heavy breathing, deep vocals, squealing sax breaks and snakey guitar It's like a more filled-out version of Morphine's sound, but looser and not as minimally compulsive The Stooges' *Funhouse* was the grandaddy of this particular marriage of low-slung raunch to free jazz aspirations and there are plenty of echoes of that here, notably "Freak Now" and "Unbuckled"

Red Red Meat Bunny Gets Paid SUB POP SP 318 CD/LP World-weary stuff, like a bluesy counterpart to Will Oldham's Palace Music, with sudden violent lurches into loud guitar territory Vocalist Tim Rutili has written most of the material and the result is a tense, cluttered affair "Carpet Of Horses" threatens to pull apart at the seams, but remains held together by a barely audible synth pulse, elsewhere it's the sheer force of the songs which manages to contain their loose component parts, and then re-channel them ("Chain Chain Chain", "Rosewood, Wax, Voltz + Glitter") This is the very opposite of 'tight' rock, but it has a uniqueness in its overall sound suggesting looming greatness

Telstar Ponies In The Space Of A Few Minutes FIRE D52 CD/MC/LP Containing ex-members of Teenage Fanclub and 18 Wheeler, Telstar Ponies confound expectations of a power-pop summit meeting and instead come in with a debut of strange, off-kilter beauty *In The Space Of A Few Minutes* has a big sound, a widescreen distortion of pop, but it never sounds self-inflated or lost in melodrama "Lungengeschichte" is based around a single, repeated chord, and the hypnotic "Innerhalb Weniger Minuten" contains a sonorous recitation recalling Patti Smith at her most out there In a climate of Britpop lads-togetherness and sledgehammer music-hall irony, Telstar Ponies seem willing to inject their work with real drama, and to reject the easy option of rousing choruses and third-hand guitar classicism There's real soul to be found here, in songs like "Two's Insane" and "Moon, Don't Come Up Tonight"



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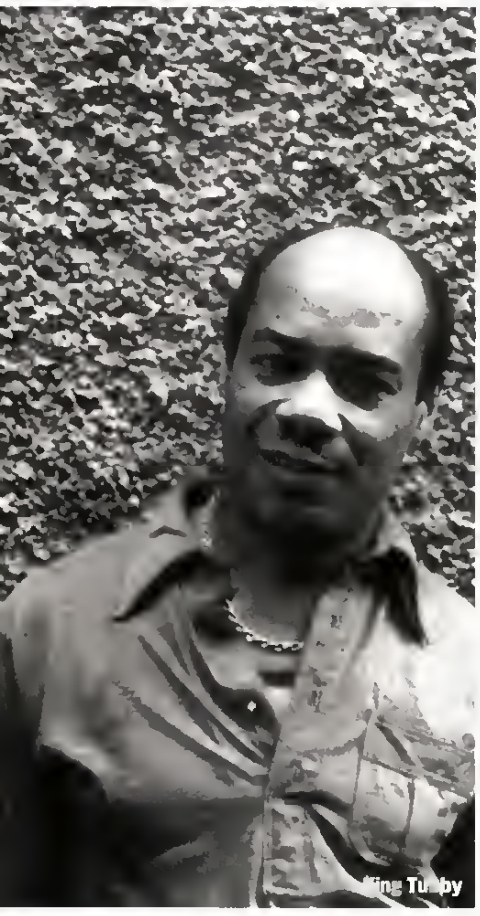
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New music books — read, raved about, routed

In this month's books section:
David Toop's nomadic drift through the sonic aether; Julian Cope's potted/potty history of the Great Kosmische Musik



Ocean Of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound & Imaginary Worlds

By David Toop

SERPENT'S TAIL (PBK £9 99)

"All that is solid turns to aether" *Ocean Of Sound* brilliantly traces technology's disintegration of the Western musical object — the 19th century composition, the early 20th century song — into the late 20th century of Ambient soundscapes and infinite remixology Music's century long dissipation into a soundfield, David Toop argues, anticipates our immersion in the information ocean of the Digital Age

Toop's sharpest move is to track this century long process through jump-cuts in time rather than sequential chronology This associative method of what he calls "personal nomadic drift" immediately opens up parallel levels of dream logic and fractal resonance that other music books can't even begin to acknowledge Consequently, *Ocean Of Sound* is less a book on music than an astonishingly dense, compellingly sombre and truly estranged compendium of dream theories (from North London, Bali, Kyoto, the Amazon, New York, Hollywood ...), machine age ceremonies, sonic thanatologies, astro-mythologies, techno-visions and environmental communiques from this alien planet Earth

Its parallels aren't music books at all, but rather Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, Michel Leiris's *Afrique Phantome*, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and (though Toop never refers to it) Chris Marker's film *Sans Soleil* Like these, *Ocean Of Sound* is a Martian Chronicle, a defamiliarising travelogue, but Toop goes further than these writers in his unnerving exploration of the aetherial signals transmitting from nature to technology and from spirituality to machinery

For Toop, "Recording is a dream text with the studio as the otherworld" *Ocean Of Sound* travels freely between these four interlinked zones Chapters often open with dreams (his own, Sun Ra's, Varese's) juxtaposed with Gibsonian/Markeresque snapshots of railway stations, T-shirt logos and dubbed market stall tapes It opens in a reverie (that riffs on Levi-Strauss's communion with his cat), segues into dream theory from Muswell Hill, then focuses on the sonic fiction of Pynchon, Ballard and Huysmans These examples of "impossible musics from unknown worlds" act as doorways into Ambient, are considered as sonic landscapes for exploration

Certain figures are crucial for their active disintegration of the defined musical object Debussy, Satie, Varese, Cage, Riley, Eno, Macero, Hassell Toop locates Debussy's 19th century exotica, like the sensory experiments of Huysmans's aesthete Des Esseintes, as a proto-virtual reality, the beginning of a fantasised absorption in Balinese and Indonesian gamelan music that runs through to Jon Hassell's Fourth World classics and the triple CDs of countless mid-90s armchair headphonauts

Ambient music becomes a recording passage through which the Indian classical music of Pandit Pran Nath, Shinto Buddhism and Zen Buddhism travel into the West and back again Terry Riley's all-day/all-night concerts are new sonic rituals and machine age ceremonies At one point Toop suddenly inserts the etymology of the African-American slang expression 'chill out' (to be murderously cool) into the text. By the time he starts discussing the UK's 90s Ambient scene a few pages later, this association has lingered until it's difficult not to think of chill out as a rehearsal for hibernation or a communal funeral rite

Similarly Toop shows how Cage's prepared piano (an archetypal post-war modernist act) modifies Indian and African techniques of distressed instruments, and suggests, all too briefly, that satellite dishes function as 90s spirit mediums In *Count Zero*, Gibson set up similar connections of spiritual technology/hi-tech spirits in the voodoo pantheon that haunts cyberspace

But Toop goes way, way further, which shouldn't surprise anyone who read his 1984 book *The Rap Attack* Flick back to the Electro chapter in that book (published the same year as *Neuromancer* and Donna Haraway's *A Manifesto For Cyborgs* Orwell was so wrong it's laughable) and there he is elaborating on the nexus of video games, Shaolin movies, Marvel comics and drum machines condensed into Reggie Griffin's "Mirda Rock" Cutting from Eno to the remixology of disco producer Walter Gibbons and the sonic sculpture of King Tubby is a move we all take for granted now, but it's one Toop pioneered in the 80s as editor of *Collusion* magazine

The sections on electronic exhumations, deadzone duets (Natalie Cole and Nat King Cole) and exploitation overdubs — some of the most startling in the whole book — come from this *Collusion* period Sometimes he imagines deadzone duets of his own 19th century Ghanaian musicians playing Wagner, Sun Ra's Arkestra interpreting Varese Toop happily remixes archetypal modernists like Varese because they'd have done the same (if they could) and because the plastic logic of late 20th century tech/music is magically


Julian Cope

retroactive *Ocean Of Sound* emphasises the struggle involved in turning the studio from its "documentary origins into a virtual chamber" and from there into the 90s virtual studio.

Toop takes the implications of remixology across the borders of life and death. In fact, the book is littered with deaths. Albert Ayler, Walter Gibbons, Arthur Russell, Sun Ra, all noted in deadpan prose. Toop points to a disconcerting pattern in studio visionaries like Brian Wilson, Phil Spector, Joe Meek and Lee Perry, whose sonic alchemy leads to their hearing voices in their heads. This is a more disturbingly productive approach than that adopted by critics like John Corbett, who bracket out Perry's comments because he's mad, or others who argue, with no understanding of prevailing cultural and economic imperatives, that Perry's madness would disqualify him from 'serious atttention' if he was white.

Ocean Of Sound reintegrates what at one time seemed utterly opposed: the austere 70s of sound installations and improvised music with the wildstyle 80s of dance music journalism. But the book's ending, in which a bitten Toop journeys through the teeming, writhing Amazon jungle to record Yanomami Indian shamans, turns it round: now he's a decade ahead of rave's shaman fascination. It's as if he's inherited the same sonic obsession, the same fixation with the limits of the human, as the figures he admires and details so amazingly. David Toop is our Calvino and our Leiris, our Gibson and our Marker. *Ocean Of Sound* is as alien as the 20th century, as utterly Now as the 21st. An essential mix.

KODWO ESHUN

Krautrocksampler: One Head's Guide To The Great Kosmische Musik — 1968 Onwards

By Julian Cope

HEAD HERITAGE (PBK £7.99)

With the kind of apostolic enthusiasm it's hard to imagine in any other overstressed and underpaid pop biographer, Julian Cope has delivered a cute-sized primer on this otherwise undocumented impulse in late 60s/mid-70s Germanic avant rock. The only comparable volume I've encountered is Pascal Bussy's *Can Book*, a pinched history that concentrates too hard on obsessive detail to engage with the weird rock/experimental music community that Can were the most visible members of. *Krautrocksampler*, as its modest title suggests, can indeed only function as an entry to a constantly circulating pool of musicians and projects doomed to folly (and whose stories, in certain obscure cases, are still being played out).

On its own terms (ie as 'One Head's Guide To '), it's a pretty unqualified success. With little interview-based research, it's actually a tour demarcated by Cope's exhaustive record collection, except for the closing chapters on The Cosmic Couriers, which are based on the unpublished memoirs of Brian Barritt, a British "psychedelic guru and poet" who ended up hanging out with Ash Ra Tempel and friends at their most addled and inspired. The Goddess only knows what became of some of the scene's major players, so maybe it's best that characters such as Uli Trepte of Guru Guru, Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser and the entire Amon Duul I and II rival collectives, are enshrined at the height of their creative powers in Cope's infectious, often giddy whirl of prose.

However, the prose occasionally gets a little *too* giddy, and that tends to let the text down over the long haul. Cope writes as an evangelist, fan, and latecome kindred spirit rather than a critic, which is fine, except that as a result the writing often reads like a first draft, littered with Capital Letters for Important Things, freeky spellings and irritating run-ons of three dots. But there's another feature that really grates most after a couple of chapters. And that's the biggest teeth-grinder of them all. Because Julian is terribly fond of starting sentences with conjunctions. So what he needed for this was a good editor (his wife Donan is credited as a proof-reader, but proof-readers need to be independent). A little more thought could have gone into the division of the book: nine chapters dealing with each main group or scene in turn, then a straight list of Cope's recommended records (confusingly numbered like a chart, even though they're listed alphabetically), and then the *same* list again, this time with Cope's idiosyncratic reviews of each.

Stylistic reservations aside, *Krautrocksampler* (which started life as two extended articles published in *The Wire* at the end of last year) offers a barrage of fresh insights, revealing a musical community that exhumed new life from older Germanic traditions of cosmic romanticism and welded them clumsily on to rock formations gleaned from US/UK garage rock and, later, glam. Cope's the first person I've heard make the connection between the US post-war military presence in Germany and the development of Krautrock. His mind does fly off at oblique tangents worthy of a Faust LP at times — viz the potted history of Timothy Leary's kidnapping and abduction to North Africa by the Black Panthers (Leary's contribution to Krautrock was the terminally obscure cosmic blues jam with the Kraut illuminati on The Cosmic Couriers' *Seven Up*), or the digressions that cut to Cope as a teenager in the record department of Tamworth Woolies, pondering the sleeve of the latest Amon Duul LP.

Towering above all the madness is a vivid feeling for the fertility of the time and the place, the ludicrously lofty goals of such scene-shapers as Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, upstart boss of the Ohr and Kosmische Musik labels, who even in the depths of poverty managed to persuade a German hi-fi magazine to pay for the release of a new Cosmic Couriers LP as a free stereo test disc, the often astounding harnessing of meditational mysticism and technological innovation, and to cause wonder that the best (early) works of the various collectives — Tangerine Dream, Ash Ra Tempel, Kraftwerk/Organisation — has remained out of the reach of historians and record buyers alike. Cope's zeal doesn't permit him to speculate on why things went wrong — he doesn't even rate Can's post-*Ege Bamyasi* (1972) work, so simply doesn't discuss it — but in the course of reading this incredible, hilarious and tragic story, and looking through the swathe of colour reproductions of those whacky sleeves helpfully reprinted in the book's middle section, you kind of get the picture. In fact, you wonder how this galere of cosmic jokers, thrill jockeys and misplaced geniuses got away with it for so long.

ROB YOUNG

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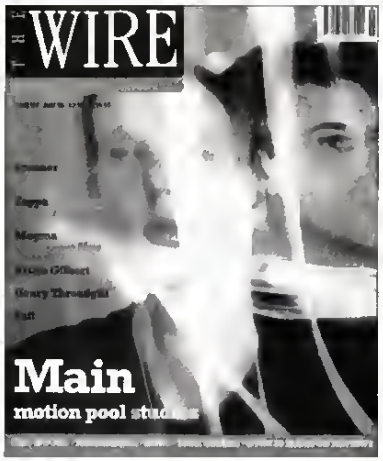
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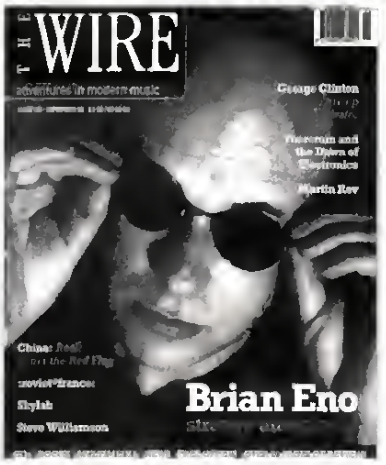
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multi media

Mark Espiner enters the realm of the extended CD



IMAGE TAKEN FROM EBN'S *TELECOMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN*

This month sees the assault of the enhanced CD, otherwise known as CD Plus. While you may have read here and elsewhere that the future of music's relationship with interactive technologies was going to be played out on the CD-ROM platform, musicians and record labels have seen a new tack: release the music playable as a CD on ordinary CD audio players, fill the remaining disk space with multimedia data, make it usable 'cross-platform' — ie on Macintosh, PC, and, depending on who is pushing the product, CD-i — and keep the retail price down.

We will be seeing a lot of these enhanced CDs in the coming months, as the major record companies continue to try to snatch a slice of the massive games and computer markets.

The pitch is obvious: you buy the music and the multimedia is a bonus. At this (admittedly early) stage, however, the producers of enhanced CDs seem to be limiting the multimedia add-ons to a collection of album credits, jerky video loops and soundbites. You can interact with these, but do you really want to? So far, enhanced CDs seem to hail the dawn of that most feared of entities, the interactive sleeve note, rather than offering a new way of experiencing, exploring and understanding music.

None the less, the format has attracted attention from three very different groups of musicians: American underground media guerrillas Emergency Broadcast Network, Island's anodyne chart-wallahs The Cranberries, and Transcendental Love Machine.

Their visual treatment of the new form is as different as their respective approaches to music (and, it seems, the amount of money behind them).

Designed by Wonderful World Productions, the CD Plus version of Transcendental Love Machine's "Revolvaluation", the third single to be lifted from their *Orgasmatronic* album, makes a bold step, in that it is prepared to develop multimedia at all. Put together over a ten week period, the CD contains all the standard material (discography, biography, full length video of the single, more information on TLM's label Hydrogen Dukebox) and benefits from the fact that the group's video director Mike Olley had a hand in the artistic direction. A good use of looped sound provides soundtracks to each screen, but you can't listen to the three new mixes of the single and interact with the CD at the same time. A quirky sense of humour finds its way into much of the material, but essentially, it's just another point and click experience which doesn't really take you anywhere.

The Cranberries' "Doors And Windows" is also fairly point and click: you wander through virtual rooms, clicking lights on and off, while videoed ghosts of The Cranberries themselves fiddle with objects (a CD player, a TV, a book) to encourage you to investigate them. And guess what? The CD player plays the five tracks on the single, the TV plays some video clips, and the scrapbooks contain photos, press clippings and song lyrics. The whole feel of "Doors And Windows" is pretty much that of a child's pop up book: click on a window and a face appears behind it. The backstage camcorder footage shot by the group 'on the road', and a video of them performing at Woodstock 94 does not save it.

Again, you can't listen to the music while you interact: you have to sit and listen, or else point and click. The interactive pursuit in "Doors And Windows" is not an end in itself, but rather provides promotional support and a trivia base for the group. The disc is playable on the CD-i platform, which might have something to do with Island's links with PolyGram and Philips, who have been backing CD-i for many years now (despite the fact that most pundits regarded it as a dead in the water platform from the day of its launch).

Emergency Broadcast Network's *Telecommunication Breakdown*, an album rather than single release, is an experience, and — at last — you can listen through the LP while simultaneously interacting with the multimedia components.

A rapid flood of video loops runs alongside the music track (a process which steals a march on its peers) and is manipulated by mouse clicks. If you were unsure of EBN's agenda, which is linked to their notions of millenarian information overload and gridlock, you can click in one of the 16 boxes on the split-screen video wall which serves as the user interface and they'll tell you themselves that they want to "maximise the entertainment value of synchronised multiple source audio visual products and delivery systems".

Like an Industrial version of Material, the music mashes up Ambient, Techno and HipHop: two tracks have been remixed by Eno and Bill Laswell, and Melle Mel, ex- of The Furious Five, contributes a powerful rap on "Shoot The Mac-10".

A testcard bleeding white noise begins (and ends) the interactive experience, creating the illusion that you have just tuned into some dormant TV station. When the visuals appear, the EBN logo speaks the graphic language of a cable station, while the 16 banked screens blip images (mostly drawn from US news broadcasts) at disorientating speed. Much of the interface has been designed using a video sampler, which allows visual clips to be triggered by MIDI devices, and further develops the aggressive use of video familiar from both their own live performances and the material they contributed to U2's *ZOO-TV* show.

Telecommunication Breakdown is a rather literal comment on what the writer Saul Bellow called the 'Distracted Public'. According to Bellow, channel hopping displaces reason and inhibits freedom. Listening and looking at EBN's work, maybe he was right: the sober, but insistent soundbites culled from who knows what US TV station seem to be trying to say the same thing: "Ignorance is converted into knowledge." "You will listen and obey." □ *"Revolvaluation" is released by Hydrogen Dukebox on 13 November. "Doors And Windows" is available through Island Records.* Telecommunication Breakdown *is out now on TVT Records, 23 East 4th Street, New York, NY 10003, USA. Mark Espiner can be e-mailed at mark@mmcorp.com*

david toop

Here is the news. . .


Howlin' Wolf

This month, were I a DJ on Jazz FM (is that its name still? Sorry, don't know) or Radio Three's breakfast show, I would be inclined to mix up, segue and generally 'rewind selector' a Derek Bailey guitar solo called "Unity Theatre" with Howlin' Wolf's "Natchez Burning"

You're all agog, I can tell, so let me explain "Unity Theatre" was recorded at Bailey's Islington home in 1976 Over a flurry of those fiercely picked and brushed notes which float uniquely between harmonics, open pitches and the woody snap of dampened strings, Mr Bailey narrates a contemporary newspaper account of a catastrophic fire at the Unity Theatre, an important mid-70s North London venue for the Musicians' Co-Op The Howlin' Wolf track presents itself as a slice of oral history also (though neither narrator is exactly voice-of-the-nation Trevor McDonald), and documents for posterity a tragic fire at a dance hall in Natchez, Mississippi

I like this idea that local news should be delivered by appropriate link persons in the style they deem fitting Sweep away those wind-blown, helicoptered, on-the-scene reporters, and substitute the likes of Wolf, grating raw chunks of language into soundbites such as *"Did you ever hear about the burning/That happened way down in Natchez, Mississippi town?"*, clanging around in so much reverb that he sounds like he's transmitting from inside the metal shell of an intergalactic flying saucer *"I was looking,"* croaks Wolf, *"and the old building done tumbled down"*

Never mind fire, the way Wolf sang, a look from him was surely enough to flatten architecture I doubt if Derek Bailey was watching the Unity conflagration, but the old building sure done tumbled down Not so much the Unity Theatre, but a musical philosophy At lunch the other day, I heard an amusing description of Jazz FM's current 'supper jazz' slot as being so bachelor pad Ovaltinee as to snooze you right off the road as you drive home after a mid-90s ten hour work slog Then I read about a US poll which voted Kenny G to the number two spot in 'musicians we would most like to perform at our wedding'

I'll come clean I own a Kenny G album — the *Love On The Rise* thing he did with Kashif, the 80s king of sequenced bass I've got a soft and vulnerable place for schlocky sheen, despite titles such as "Sax Attack" But in my opinion, if anybody with Kenny G big 'n' teased hair turns up at a wedding then the vicar has a duty to demand that those who know any just cause as to why such hair should not be allowed to wed the head on which it sprouts then they should speak or be damned forever

That's aside from the music, which may be a nuptial soundtrack but bears little relationship to jazz A dreamy predictable pronouncement, I know, so let me try to redeem myself I've been listening to some 70s improvised music reissues and first time issues on CD Derek Bailey's *Domestic & Public Pieces*, an Evan Parker and Paul Lytton called *Three Other Stories (1971-1974)*, and Spontaneous Music Ensemble's *Face To Face*, all on the revived Emanem label, as well as Derek Bailey's *Incus Taps* (sic), released by Organ Of Corti out in sunny Malibu

Thanks to a loan by Tony Herrington, I've also been home taping two Eddie Henderson albums from the same period, both of which make forays into a fascinating territory of broke-down funk On the face of it, Californian and New York psychedelic jazz and English improvisation had little in common Not just the face of it either Down deep, they were very different But the shared factor was *listening*

At the beginning of the 60s, free jazz and associated forms broke apart structuring principles that had become ossified That's common knowledge, but free jazz was flawed from the beginning by its own tendency to ossify into repetitious blather Free jazz was about power, endurance, speaking in tongues, the temporary and stereotypical liberation of the Pentecostalist.

Rhetoric was big in the 60s but listening was not. Inevitably, interesting forms arose in response to a decade of (necessary) shouting, elevating listening to a prime structuring role in the spontaneous creation of music And just as inevitably, these forms were shaped into something more remunerative In the case of Miles Davis, Eddie Henderson, Herbie Hancock, Joe Zawinul and the rest, the story is very familiar Fourth World electric funk needed remarkably little nudging to find itself a comfortable home in Easy Listening, pop-melodic funk-jazz. the wedding music of Kenny G, ultimately

In Europe, where the electronics tended to be home-made, quasi-pop stardom was not an option Those who found free improvisation to be a shirt altogether too hairy, a bank balance too unbalanced, a freedom too circumscribed, tended to end up back in the pubs playing some version of post-Coltrane hard bop or jazz minus the Stevie Wonder melodies

Like everyone else, I have no reliable way of assessing or proving the percolation theory that a concert played to four people can change the world two decades later It's undeniable, for those who were there, that the Evan Parker/Paul Lytton duo provided a storming night out in the early 70s with their uniquely monstrous brand of alchemical cyclone ritual music Wedding music, you might call it, though a wedding of Outer Mongolian nomadic shamans rather than a white dress and three-tiered iced fruitcake affair But the audience for Parker/Lytton was a sprinkling of acolytes by comparison with the worshipful throng you might find at a Weather Report show As for the Derek Bailey tapes collected and issued by Organ Of Corti, these were recorded by Bailey at home in editions of one and sold on individual 3" reels of 1/4" tape at a bargain price of 60p

Exclusive, not 'alf Yet I firmly believe that music of the present, including wedding vow enhancers and supper jazz, owes a great deal to these various intensive experiments in listening In his sleeve notes to the Emanem releases, label boss Martin Davidson bangs on in paranoid fashion, as he always did, about the total superiority of improvised music over anything else Really, it's not necessary to go that far over the top to know that listening is the vital missing ingredient in so much 90s jazz-type stuff With these instructive examples as a guide, a return to listening may be imminent □

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